THE Public Interest

NUMBER 138, WINTER 2000, PRICE: $6.50

The Spirit of Capitalism, 2000
David Bosworth

Pedophilia and the Culture Wars	*G. E. Zuriff*
Welfare Reform and Reducing Teen Pregnancy	*Isabel V. Sawhill*
McLuhan's World—and Ours	*David Skinner*
Budgeting More, Deciding Less	*Eric M. Patashnik*
The Bad Law of "Disparate Impact"	*Roger Clegg*
To the "Disadvantaged" Go the Spoils?	*George R. La Noue*

BOOKS IN REVIEW:

David Brooks • Brian C. Anderson • Diana West • Hillel Fradkin • Michae

per
H
1
P86
138

Musselman Library
The Public interest
Received on: 12-14-99

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE Public Interest

NUMBER 138, WINTER 2000

CONTENTS

The Spirit of Capitalism, 2000	*David Bosworth*	3
Pedophilia and the Culture Wars	*G. E. Zuriff*	29
Welfare Reform and Reducing Teen Pregnancy	*Isabel V. Sawhill*	40
McLuhan's World—and Ours	*David Skinner*	52
Budgeting More, Deciding Less	*Eric M. Patashnik*	65
The Future of Racial Quotas:		
The Bad Law of "Disparate Impact"	*Roger Clegg*	79
To the "Disadvantaged" Go the Spoils?	*George R. La Noue*	91
Books in Review:		
A Clearing in the Distance, by Witold Rybczynski — *David Brooks*		99
Madness and Democracy, by Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain — *Brian C. Anderson*		104
Ready or Not, by Kay S. Hymowitz — *Diana West*		109
The Future and Its Enemies, by Virginia Postrel — *Hillel Fradkin*		114
The True Size of Government, by Paul Light — *Michael Barone*		120
Urban Problems and Community Development, edited by Ronald Ferguson and William Dickens — *Louis Winnick*		124

THE PUBLIC INTEREST (ISSN# 0033-3557) is published quarterly by National Affairs, Inc., and appears in Winter, Spring, Summer, and Fall issues. Its office of publication is located at 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C., 20036. Telephone: (202) 785-8555. If you have problems with your subscription, please call (888) 267-6030. Subscription price: $25 for one year, $42.50 for two years, $60 for three years. Add $3 annually for Canadian and foreign subscriptions (via surface mail). To receive back issues, please send a check for $7.50 per issue to the office of publication. Second-class postage is paid at Washington, D.C., and at additional mailing offices. ©2000 by National Affairs, Inc. Postmaster: Please send all changes of address to *The Public Interest* Subscription Office, Dept. PI, P.O. Box 3000, Denville, N.J., 07834. Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Reader's Guide, P.A.I.S., Historical Abstracts, ABC Pol Sci, Social Science Index, Sociological Abstracts, Academic Abstracts, Social Science Source,* and *America: History and Life,* and are available on microfilm from University Microfilms International. *The Public Interest* is printed by Cadmus Journal Services.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Editors
Irving Kristol and Nathan Glazer

Publication Committee
Martin Feldstein
Roger Hertog
H. J. Kaplan
Bruce Kovner
Charles Krauthammer
Glenn C. Loury
Daniel P. Moynihan
Charles Murray
Isabel V. Sawhill
Martin E. Segal
Roger Starr
Irwin M. Stelzer
James Q. Wilson

Executive Editor
Adam Wolfson
Managing Editor
Eric S. Cohen
Assistant Editor
Brian Campbell
Assistant to the Editors
Erin E. Architzel

Editorial Office
1112 16th Street, NW, Suite 530
Washington, DC 20036

Subscription Office
The Public Interest, Department PI
P.O. Box 3000, Denville, NJ 07834
(888) 267-6030

Newsstand Distributors
Bernhard DeBoer, Inc.
113 Centre Street
Nutley, NJ 07110

Ingram Periodicals, Inc.
4281 Edison Avenue
Chino, CA 91709

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The spirit of capitalism, 2000

DAVID BOSWORTH

EACH of us brings his favorite examples to the table when the subject of contemporary adult immaturity is raised. From the multitude of news items that, by turns, offend and amaze, I offer the following two as especially illustrative of our postmodern, postindustrial, indisputably American age.

The first, which captured the attention of nightly newscasts all across the nation, related the story of a white, middle-class, Midwest couple, an engineer and a homemaker, who decided they needed a winter vacation and so flew south to warmer climes, leaving their two preteenage children behind for nine full days, including Christmas, unattended. When their daughters, ages four and nine, accidentally set off a smoke alarm in their suburban home, a neighbor notified the police

---

A version of this essay was presented as a working paper to the Council on Families at the Institute for American Values and is published here with the Council's permission.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

who then arrested the parents when they finally deplaned from their Acapulco getaway. This so-called "Home Alone" case was especially troubling to the national conscience, I think, because it seemed to exhibit a purely hedonistic motivation for offensive behavior, absent any apparent pathological or political substrate, such as drug addiction or an attempt to manipulate welfare rules. It was even more troubling, perhaps, in that all the various ways of categorizing the offending couple refuted our easiest, self-exculpatory presumptions about antisocial behavior: that the desertion of America's children is primarily a problem of single-parent families, or of men, or of a mostly black and urban underclass, or of a corrupt liberal cultural elite that has taken up residence on the two coasts.

The second example is even stranger but no less troubling to our easy presumptions about the origins of irresponsible behavior. Back in 1990, a terminally ill Californian was involved in an unusual legal suit. Credentialed in precisely those ways we now soberly respect, this Silicon Valley computer consultant, with a doctorate in mathematics from the University of Chicago, wanted the court to permit doctors to fulfill his final wish, which was, grotesque as it seems, to have his head cut off before his disease actually killed him. His intention was not some bizarre form of euthanasia (Dr. Kevorkian meets "Chain Saw Massacre") but its opposite: He didn't want to die in peace so much as live forever. The plan was to have himself instantly frozen "alive," in hopes of being revived when the advances of science might cure his disease. And because he believed his true self to reside in his brain (recall his profession), and because the private companies that offer cryonic deep-freeze charge far less for preserving a head than a whole human body ($35,000 versus $100,000 at that time), he was requesting decapitation so that he could afford a procedure which he had come to believe might eventually save him.

The great naturalist Louis Agassiz is said to have commanded a graduate student to study a single dead fish for weeks to make him intimate with the form (and deformation) of animal anatomy. What I would suggest is that the computer consultant's judicial request might serve as an equally instructive specimen. I would suggest that if we think, and think

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hard, about a justice system that would entertain such a suit, about an economy that would spawn such a company, about the philosophy that predicated the man's reasoning, and about the ethical implications of investing one's resources in such a way, we might achieve an intimate comprehension of our culture's anatomy, its current form and deformation.

Let it be noted first that this man's decision making was rooted in the basic premises of the prevailing practical philosophy of our day—which is, I would assert, a form of rational materialism largely stripped of Judeo-Christian values. Although his request seems extreme to the point of absurdity, he was not being rash; his reasoning, to the contrary, was highly methodical, rational, and (some might even say) brave. After studying the medical evidence, he had accepted the terrible truth of a terminal diagnosis, researched his options, and made a kind of cost-benefit analysis. Unlike so many today, he wasn't asking for a government handout, only for the right to exercise a unique opportunity offered to him by the combined creativity of science and the marketplace. One could argue, in short, that the man was a good capitalist consumer, acting out of precisely the kind of enlightened self-interest thought to produce both economic prosperity and social progress, and that he was a model democratic citizen, using the peaceful means of the law to pursue his constitutional right to direct his own destiny.

Is it fair to call such a request immature? If maturity can be defined as those character traits necessary for the sustenance of a harmonious society, and if the sustaining of such a society depends on adults who have adapted to the realities of the human condition, including the reality of death, and who are willing, therefore, to bequeath both their wisdom and their wealth to the next generation—then, yes, I believe it is fair. Although opposite in apparent temper, this "rational" request for decapitation is no less self-centered in its own way than the rash desertion of the vacationing couple, and, as a model for adult decision making, no less destructive to society.

The new majority

But is it fair to use two such extreme examples as somehow representative of the nation's immaturity? Society, after all,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

officially condemned the couple (they were pilloried in the press, convicted of neglect, and lost custody of their children), and the court finally refused the dying consultant's request. Yet, although these individuals did transgress the borders of permissible behavior, their ways of thinking are, alas, not that far removed from the newly emerging cultural norms. Middle-class children are left on their own every day in postindustrial America, often by parents who are off satisfying their "own needs" as defined ever more expansively (and expensively) by our consumer economy; and the denial of death is an urgent and still burgeoning industry here. Millions of medical dollars are spent mechanically prolonging the lives of the mortally comatose and thousands of puffy words expended avoiding the pronouncement of the one-word sentence we all must share: i.e., death. Although our movies are notorious for their abundant body counts, our own real-life relation to the inescapable fact of our mortality is best captured by the perhaps apocryphal octogenarian lady who, when informed that she was dying, responded plaintively: "Why *me*?"

It is crucial to note, too, that such delusions are by no means limited to the uneducated or to a willfully superstitious laity. Supposedly serious scientists, associated with prestigious institutions like M.I.T.'s Media Lab, continue to make claims that we shall eventually invent our way into an actual immortality. (True to the ruling philosophy of the day, these claims are of two schools: the *rationalists*, like Hans Moravec from Carnegie Mellon, who believe that we will eventually "download" our individual minds into computers and, enacting a Cartesian escape from our merely mortal flesh, live forever as continuously evolving "software"; and the more traditional *materialists* who still focus on perfecting the flesh itself through drug protocols and genetic engineering.) Nor do political affiliation or philosophy seem to exempt one from these now pandemic temptations to immature behavior. Republican, Democrat, and Independent alike invest in cosmetic surgery, throw adolescent road-rage fits, flatter their "inner child," variously defined, to the detriment of their actual children.

I open with this complementary pair of incidents, then, because I believe they illustrate my larger point: The behavior that disturbs us now is very broadbased and is performed by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

men and women of the middle class, by "us," exercising our freedom of choice as directed implicitly and explicitly by the values of our postindustrial economy—an economy that increasingly encloses and invades the everyday lives of both liberals and conservatives. Although most of us still cling to the traditional rhetoric of religious and civic responsibility, which has long counterbalanced America's radical experiment in individual liberty, these incidents illustrate the ways in which we have been drawn, often unconsciously, toward entirely different schedules of ideal behavior, schedules hostile to both the temper and the habits of a democratic community. That is to say, what we actually believe and what we think we believe no longer mesh. While some of that discrepancy may be attributable to an intentional deception—i.e., to the self-conscious hypocrisy that the opposing critics in our culture wars love to dissect—much of it occurs below the level of articulate self-awareness. Such a claim, that these destructive changes are both ubiquitous and largely unconscious, strongly suggests that, even as we admit the urgency of the problem, we ought to tone down the partisan scorn that has come to characterize these analyses. It also poses the grand question that haunts all our current cultural conflicts: Exactly how has our behavior shifted so dramatically without our self-conscious knowledge or consent?

Capitalism's two selves

Thirty-five years ago, Marshall McLuhan supplied a partial answer when he observed that "everyone experiences far more than he understands. Yet it is experience, and not understanding, that influences behavior." McLuhan was primarily concerned, of course, with the shift in communications from print to the electronic media, and the statement can be seen as a brief elaboration of his catchy aphorism, "the medium is the message." But the principle applies more broadly as well. To the extent that our daily experience is at all humanly mediated—"brought to us by" human ideas, technologies, architectures—it is necessarily suffused with implicit moral values. Churches and synagogues can tell us what we should believe, continuing to teach traditional virtues, but if the grounds and rounds of daily life are calibrated differently, our behavior

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

will begin to shift accordingly. We can continue to "talk the talk" but won't "walk the walk" as, in Hamlet's words, "that monster, custom, who doth all sense eat," silently reconfigures our daily actions.

That since World War II our capitalist economy—its ventures, ambitions, procedures, and "messages"—has become the new primary calibrator of our daily experience is not a controversial claim. My subsequent assertion that its new predominance has led to the very patterns of rash and rational immaturity cited above, however, requires a more elaborate analysis. To begin, we can cite and extend the central thesis of Daniel Bell's recently reissued *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*—which is, in essence, a postindustrial updating of Max Weber's 1904 classic, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Among the contradictions astutely analyzed by Bell is that between the ethos of capitalist production—which still requires obedience, hard work, and self-sacrifice through delayed gratification—and the ethos of capitalist consumption, with its idealizing of hedonism, rebellion against authority, and impulsive behavior (such as deserting your children for a sudden vacation).

Simply stated, the two main divisions of capitalist commerce, production and sales, have come to require two opposing regimens of ideal behavior—one rational, the other rash—and these regimens suggest two discordant identities, a coolly mechanical and narrowly accountable Producing Self (Dr. Jekyll) and a hotly appetitive Consuming Self (Mr. Hyde). In the gotcha game of the culture wars each side cleverly identifies and "outs" the antisocial excesses of its opponent's Consuming Self even as it ignores its own. The conservative spotlights, in alternating tones of contempt and alarm, the dangers of the liberal's sexual and aesthetic excesses while the liberal satirizes and sermonizes against the excessive greed and conspicuous consumption of the corporate elite. Not only does each side see the moral ugliness of the other's Hyde while missing its own, both tend to miss the ongoing conflict all of us face in attempting to follow two essentially incompatible models of behavior. Neither side acknowledges the emotional stress and cognitive dissonance of being asked to play, often in the very same day, both an abstemious Jekyll and an avid Hyde.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

It is not simply commerce, then, but commerce's two separate moral regimens for production and consumption that are the new primary calibrators of our daily experience; they are "the monster[s] ... who doth all sense eat"—who, that is, have become so customary that, like the air we breathe, we cease to actively sense their influence. What I wish to emphasize here, however, is that both prospective identities are potentially destructive, the Producing Self no less than the Consuming Self, whose depravations are more commonly noted. Not only can a good employee be an awful parent, neighbor, or citizen; that employee is, I would contend, more likely to be an ineffective parent or neighbor if he or she continues to follow the customary values of the postmodern workplace beyond the bounds of the office, factory, or store. If, for example, delayed gratification were sufficient in itself to good citizenship, then who could be a more exemplary citizen than our computer consultant, a man willing to "sacrifice" his body now and put his head on ice for untold years before experiencing the "gratification" of his revival?

The end of adulthood

If I am right, then a recovery of moral maturity would require a new sort of abstinence, more expansively defined. In our struggle to relearn what it means to be good parents and neighbors, we would need to withdraw from those spheres where the narrow schedules of both the Avid Consumer and the Efficient Producer overly determine our daily experience.

Yet everywhere we turn these tacitly moral customizers now intrude. They have converted the public square, which has been subsumed by the commercial mall. They have infiltrated the private home, which has been saturated with commercial solicitation through radio, television, and now the Web. They have co-opted the processes of democratic government, which has become increasingly beholden to commercial interests, whether "left-wing" Hollywood or "right-wing" Wall Street, through the necessities of campaign financing, and increasingly rationalized into an "information product" by for-hire election technicians like Dick Morris. They have invaded our public schools, where advertising has been allowed to intrude into the hallways and even the curriculum in return for badly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

needed funding. They have been taking command of our universities, whose laboratories and classrooms are rapidly being transformed into duchies of the postindustrial economy—the new sites for product invention and employee training—and whose humanities curricula increasingly ape the fashion-line model of planned obsolescence. They taint the studio, movie house, and literary bookstore, which continue to contain paintings, movies, and novels espousing a robotic "anti-bourgeois" sentiment that is, in fact, obedient to the hedonistic ethos of consumerism. And, finally, they have even co-opted our religious organizations, which have become increasingly obsessed with publicity and the marketing of product lines. (This is truest of the most energetic and fastest-growing movements in postmodern America, including "right-wing" fundamentalism and "left-wing" New Age sects.)

If we survey the list above, the corruption of academia, art, and religion are especially telling—insofar as these were the most likely critics of the commercial order. They demonstrate vividly how one can still talk the talk of critical independence while walking the walk of tacit compliance. The infiltration of the private home by commerce also holds a special significance in that it helps measure the stunning rapidity of the changes that have taken place. As recently as the mid sixties, most of America's women and young children still spent a high percentage of their waking hours outside the official producer economy. (The consumer economy, of course, had already entered with a vengeance via the Trojan horse of commercial TV). Today's mass entry of women into the work force (and, consequently, of children into professional child care) has meant that the entire middle-class family is now being modeled not only by the seductions of the Avid Consumer but also by the over-specializations of the Efficient Producer—by Weber's "iron cage" of highly rationalized, narrowly motivated social structures. As a result of these omnipresent, if contradictory, forms of modeling, our clothing is now stamped with the logos of commerce, our minds are now stocked with the jingles of commerce, our hours are now structured by either the rational regimens of commerce or those of bureaucratic government, and our humane responsibilities—whether as momentary as expressing a "sentiment" to our newly married

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friend or as monumental as caring for our aging parents—are increasingly purchased rather than performed.

What happened to adulthood with its full panoply of emotions, duties, competencies—its capacity for grace under multiple pressures? Adulthood has been disappearing because we now live in a place (both physical and social) radically different from the one we occupied even 40 years ago. This new habitat is a place fundamentally hostile to the virtues traditionally associated with maturity. This "new and improved" American place "grows" profit but eviscerates character; it renders our experience rationally efficient yet spiritually impoverished. Where has adulthood gone? It has been ramified, outsourced, divided into specialties for expert study and for product creation in the service economy. It has been rationalized and merchandised into non-existence.

What are the deeper sources of such a dramatic conversion? This is obviously a very complex historical question, one I can only address here in summary form as a means of framing the examples to come. To begin with, it is the logical result of the increasing triumph in American life of rational materialism, which is adept at manipulating the physical world but is also, and by design, humanly indifferent, metaphysically dumb, and morally blind. The cultural dangers of such a cluster of traits were largely avoided in America because our own version of rational materialism, "scientific capitalism," was preceded by, and (at first) politically allied with, strong traditions of both local governance and religious freedom—i.e., the original, still spiritually grounded Protestant ethic. Given those origins, our society managed to maintain a humane balance of power.

But this balance was severely challenged in the mid nineteenth century by the Industrial Revolution, with its widespread mechanization of work, specialization of thought, and urbanization of living space—here begins in earnest the still ongoing institution of Weber's iron cage. This balance was further challenged in the early twentieth century by the rise of consumerism, with its widespread boosting of new "needs" through instant credit and the constant proselytizing of advertising—here begins the seductive phase of scientific capitalism (and its cultural contradictions), its paradoxical use of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

techniques of the iron cage to create the mirage of what we might call "the gilded carrot," the ever-changing and marketable object of constant desire. The full effects of this second challenge (when added to the first) were delayed by an extended depression and an all-consuming war and thus couldn't be seen until an entire generation, the Boomers, had been raised in relative peace and unprecedented prosperity under its influence.

The failure of that generation (my own) to mature into responsible adulthood, especially into responsible parenthood, is dramatic proof of both the ideological power and social destructiveness of the current economic order. Such a failure is also a sign that the precarious, but necessary, balance between scientific capitalism and Judeo-Christianity has been lost, that the former has subsumed, co-opted, and superseded the latter to our current detriment and future moral peril.

Great expectations (1960)

The discrepancy between the hope invested in the post-War generation and our actual performance has been so severe that the anticipation itself invites further examination. By the mid fifties, giddy on the optimism of consumerism and global political domination, America really seemed to believe that its children, like its products, would necessarily be "new and improved"—that every day, in every way, we were indeed getting better and better. Year after year, in classrooms, assemblies, and convocation halls, we were told in confident tones how special we were: the richest, best educated, most technologically advanced, and implicitly—because, it was naively supposed, our character must "rise" with the surging tide of our GNP—the most righteous generation in the history of the planet. Both the oratory of officialdom and the messages of advertising were glad to agree that we were the ones destined to redeem the golden promise of the American dream: heirs not simply to the pursuit of happiness but to its purchase and possession.

The extremity of that hope (and its secret folly) is one of the stronger memories of my own, mostly benign suburban upbringing. I recall especially a posh reception following a classmate's bar mitzvah during which we, his seventh-grade

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

friends, were made to enter an enormous dining hall as though a wedding party or a royal procession. Two by two, a boy beside a girl, to the beat of a band's ceremonial music, we were marched up an aisle, parting a sea of damp-eyed adults, and then onto a raised platform where we ate, conversed, and later even danced, elevated above, yet surrounded by, the parents of suburbia hundreds in number.

Occasionally, one of the men would slip up the steps, but then only briefly, to pass to my friend an envelope thick with congratulatory cash, as if only this, his propitiatory offering, gave him license to approach. Otherwise we remained there in exalted isolation, on perpetual display. And what I remember most now, beyond my own discomfort, was how the stares of the adults kept drifting up, from their plates of prime rib, to locate us; how they would touch and then hold the hem of the moment—this carefully composed, happy tableaux of "youth on the cusp." My unrelenting desire to disappear was, of course, mostly the result of a social awkwardness befitting my age. But even then I sensed that there was something wrong in this reversal of status; something fundamentally (and frighteningly) false about the veneration we received in expressions that seesawed between proprietary joy and solemn awe.

Now, a parent myself, I better understand the temptations of such love, the ways in which our vanities survive, subversive to the end, through projecting their fantasies onto the lives of our reluctant kids. Now, glancing backward, I see that scene as especially representative of the post-War era: how religious rites of passage were being co-opted then into celebrations of materialist status; how Catholics, Protestants, and Jews alike—all of whom sat at the elevated table—were being converted to Mammon's melting-pot version of the mortgaged Good Life. What I see, when I glance back now, is the idolatry of childhood: the little god and goddess of Self-Esteem being raised on the altar of the secular dream.

About five years later, in the year of my own graduation, *Time* actually put the yearbook photos of a high-school senior class (from California, of course) on its glossy cover, confirming, as only a *Time* cover could then, the ascension of America's "youth culture." Not long thereafter *Time* also ran a cover

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

daring to wonder if God were dead, thus completing the dual prophecy already implicit in that bar mitzvah scene. For the boosting of youth and the debunking of God were (and are) associate phenomena, each arising from the true cover story of the post-War age: the triumph of the consumer economy over traditional spirituality as the arbiter of social values.

The way that we, as a generation, were so oversold only shows how much the temper of commercial salesmanship had already tainted the raising of families by the 1950s. And our failures as a group in middle age speak painfully now to this economy's own failure as the dominant model for daily behavior. Its vaunting of self-interest, its reduction of people to contacts or products, its disingenuous blurring of moral improvement with material progress: these were the values that, in the midst of our "rebellions," we were stooping to obey, blind to the results until it was too late. That our becoming "better off" might actually make a worse human place was the sort of savvy calculation that an economy programmed to Great Expectations could not, and still cannot, make.

Great expectations (1860)

To understand the nature of the economic assault on the contemporary family, we might profitably turn back to the era and nation where industrial capitalism first took hold (nineteenth-century England), and to the artistic form that evolved, in part, to study the manners and morals of middle-class life: the social novel. Charles Dickens was one of the first and most astute critics of the ways in which the then new regimens of scientific capitalism could imperil the rhythms of domestic life; and nowhere are both the dangers and adaptive responses more entertainingly drawn than in *Great Expectations* when the orphan Pip, suddenly and mysteriously made rich, is brought to London.

For there, Pip is placed under the care of the new priesthood of the Industrial Age—"the Law"—in the form of the austere and intimidating criminal lawyer Jaggers and his clerk, Mr. Wemmick. At first, Wemmick appears to be punctilious and dry, a man so bereft of civil human gestures that he has actually forgotten that people shake hands. When Wemmick brings Pip to his home, however, we learn that he hasn't lost

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his capacities for amiability and affection so much as been forced to specialize the locale of their expression. His particular job (and, by implication, the larger economy that defines that job) has required a rigid partition of his behavior—between workplace and homestead, between a strict obedience to the protocols of the law and a strong conformity to the rituals of the heart.

Dickens makes clear which of these two locales (and the separate schedules of behavior they allow) is "under siege" by providing a delightfully comic depiction of *a man's house is his castle*. For Wemmick's house, although the smallest Pip has ever seen, is a miniature redoubt. With painted Gothic windows, a ditch as a moat, a plank for a bridge, a lattice fence for stone walls, and a small gun as armament, Wemmick has self-consciously constructed his own symbolic castle to keep the modern world out.

While the castle's physical protection is merely symbolic, the psychological border it demarks is very real. Inside his castle walls, Wemmick practices the old economies of farming and craftsmanship—he is a self-reliant, independent "jack of all trades"; outside, he works a middle stratum within one of the new economy's white-collar professions—he is a highly specialized, wage employee. Inside, Wemmick maintains the old allegiances to country and clan—he raises a flag every Sunday and, much more importantly, he lovingly cares for his deaf father, whom he affectionately dubs "the aged parent"; outside, his sole allegiance is to his employer, Jaggers, and Jaggers' often disreputable clients—his loyalty is literally for hire. The man-at-home in his castle is affectionate, generous, gregarious; the man-at-work in his office is pinched, acquisitive, dutifully discreet.

Dickens's comic depiction of Wemmick's divided life captures, a full century earlier, a key ambition behind the suburban adventure of the 1950s and 1960s: the attempt to build a green-belt moat around the American family to protect it not only from physical danger but from the psychological depredations of the postwar economy. And when Pip narrates how the once gracious Wemmick becomes "dryer and harder" as he heads back to work, he might be describing the psychological transformation required of any of 10 million American fathers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

commuting daily then to their white-collar jobs.

The information age

Wemmick's challenge is the perennial one of the democratic citizen living under scientific capitalism: how to partake of its unprecedented material bounty without succumbing to its spiritual depravations; how to use its machines without, in effect, becoming one. Although always problematic, his ironic solution—to use the economy's means to build, in a sense, a fortress against that economy's beliefs—was far more feasible in 1860 than in 1960, when the penetrations of the Information Age made any large-scale segregation of private from public impossible, and when the economy's own shift to boosting consumption made the family itself a necessary target for ideological instruction. The commuting fathers of postwar America might keep their family circumstances a secret from their bosses, as Wemmick did from Jaggers, but the economy's propaganda was still invading their homes daily through radio and TV, and no moat, wall, or remote locale could block its reach.

Although Dickens died long before the Information Age, one of the subplots in *David Copperfield* does metaphorically suggest the insidious nature of its coming threat to the family's domain. Here, too, law is the profession, but Mr. Wickfield's focus is financial not criminal, his small office is in his home, and he practices in suburban Canterbury rather than fast-paced London. In character, too, Wickfield is nearly the opposite of Wemmick's master, soft to Jaggers' hard, more devoted to his wife and daughter than to his job. He is an honest man, but after his wife dies, he increasingly retreats from the details of his practice into solitude and drink—a retreat that is encouraged and, in fact, secretly stage-managed by his single employee, the clerk, Uriah Heep.

Perpetually present, always volunteering to take over for his distracted boss, Heep flatters and fawns, and behind his unctuous protestations of his own "'umbleness," the resentful underling relentlessly plots: first taking control of Wickfield's practice, then tricking him into complicity in illegal dealings, then bribing his way into a formal partnership. Eventually, he not only runs Wickfield's business as if it were his own; he completes his domination by actually moving both his mother

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and himself into Wickfield's home. While Wemmick's virtual castle managed to maintain a safe space for the practice of "family values," Wickfield's family castle has now been invaded—its spaces occupied, its practices subverted.

As the central vehicle for consumerist ideology, postwar TV was very much the Uriah Heep of technologies: always hanging about the house and bowing obsequiously, always claiming to be our servant, our ever so 'umble and unworthy servant. Like Heep, commercial TV perpetually flattered its viewers, playing on our weaknesses while subtly subverting our traditional beliefs. Like Heep, it quietly became a household fixture, so mundane and demeaned that we ceased to see this high-tech, servile "employee" for what it actually was. We failed to note, as Wickfield failed to note, how dependent we had become on its "companionship" and "services." And we failed to suspect, as the domain of its influence rapidly spread, that its offerings weren't free after all, that the interests it served were not ours but its own, and that, like Heep's, its aims were insidious—de facto control of our business, our bodies, our children in our homes.

In Dickens's story, the climax of Heep's attempted usurpation of the head, house, and heart of the Wickfield family is his plot to marry Agnes, Wickfield's only daughter. It is a plot rich with symbolic overtones, for as the novel's highly idealized heroine, Agnes practices those very same traits of modesty, solicitude, and self-abnegation (true "humbleness") that Heep can only fake. Through his blackmail, then, Heep is aiming to take possession not only of the home's sole, beloved child but of the incarnation of goodness itself. Simulated virtue is on the verge of conquering actual virtue—a triumph of fakery only foiled in the end by a comic-heroic intervention.

In our story, though, the tale of the postwar generation as stalked by the avid industries of consumerism through the "'umble" appliance of commercial TV, there is no intervention. We, the culture's "new and improved" kids, overfed and overfeted, are gradually co-opted, subtly possessed. Actual virtue is gradually subverted by simulated virtue as, in true Heepian fashion, private resentments and personal ambition assume the guise of public compassion. In our story, unlike Dickens's story, "the helping hand" is subsumed by "self-help"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

while charity becomes an industry itself, complete with commission sales forces and perk-laden chief executives. In our story, self-interest on both the Left and the Right borrows the language of the idealistic ("liberation from oppression" or "creative destruction") as we manage to progress from civil rights to self-esteem; from "keeping the world safe for democracy" to the sanctification of selfishness and the commodification of everything.

In Dickens's world, imagined at the height of the Industrial Age, the family in distress is usually saved; the regimens of industry and the rituals of domesticity manage finally to coexist in their separate domains. In our world, as reinvented by the Information Age, their domains are no longer separate. Whether in child-, health-, or "aged parent" care, the industrial increasingly runs the rituals of the domestic, and the family in distress increasingly fails.

Faux rebellion: the salesmanship of "liberation"

Because the business of America has been business for so long, because commerce is our establishment, we lose sight of the ways in which modern capitalism is necessarily anti-establishment: how it promotes disruption, dissatisfaction, mini-revolutions in tastes, habits, and so, inevitably, moral behavior.

In the American economy proper, the specific recognition that certain qualities of personal rebelliousness, rather than overthrowing capitalism, might actually be exploited to expand its base, dates back to the origins of consumerism. Not only did selling the "new" mean, implicitly at least, discounting the "old"; the very nature of some of the earliest consumer products, such as the radio and the car, radically undermined both parental and communal authority, changing the moral landscape in the 1920s and fueling a new hedonism in American life. The initial establishment response to these commercially driven shifts in behavior was a kind of crude denial and displacement of causes—to immigrants, to radicals, to urban and "un-American" sinners, to demon rum. (The grossest example of such scapegoating was Henry Ford's highly public and poisonously proselytizing anti-Semitism.) Yet by the sixties, driven by the desire to cultivate the enormous potential of the youth market, rebellion was being embraced as an explicit theme in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

advertising itself. Initially, Madison Avenue idealized the pose of liberation through traditional images of American individualism like the Marlboro Man, but soon it would learn to exploit even specifically political expressions of revolt.

This opportunistic strategy of converting social protest into marketable product was best exemplified in the seventies by the *Virginia Slims* ad campaign. Launching the first cigarette targeted exclusively for women, these familiar and highly successful ads typically featured two photos, in an ironically staged before-and-after scenario, dramatizing the change from pre- to postliberation American womanhood. In the first, a young woman who is fettered in a frumpy Victorian dress has been caught attempting to sneak a cigarette by an oppressive husband or father figure—a veritable starched phallus of paternalism complete with wagging finger, stern stare, and Germanic walrus mustache. In the second, her contemporary and now "liberated" sister poses, sassy, slender, joyous and free, her cigarette transformed into a kind of elegant fashion accessory, her progress proclaimed in the now famous phrase: "You've come a long way, baby!"

With its arch tone, its hip address, its mockery of the past and of prudishness, its trivializing of political change into selfhood's triumph, its blurring of active accomplishment with passive sexiness, and, of course, with its overall masking of solicitation with flattery—this one campaign exemplified three decades of advertising themes. Like most seductions, it played on the twin emotions of resentment and self-love, but its particular genius lay in locating the language of vanity best fitted to the age: independence, self-liberation.

That by "celebrating" freedom, these ads actually intended to enslave—a deadly addiction the hook concealed by flattery's bait—is a dark but instructive irony. It describes, in extreme, a key strategy of consumerism in the postmodern age: how each apparent inducement to rebellion can be fashioned to conceal a tacit order to obey.

"Born (Again) Gangstaz"

By the nineties, faux rebellion had become a marketing shtick so banal that some marketers were driven to casting their products in ever more outrageous terms of darkness,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

violence, and sexual excess. (One of the most notorious mainstream examples of this was a Calvin Klein ad campaign that seemed little more than a collection of pinups for pedophiles.) Ever in search of new and profitable borders to cross, pop music provided its own extreme examples, as Brett Pulley of the *Wall Street Journal* discovered.

Pulley was investigating the career of Boss Laws, a new female rapper whose first album, "Born Gangstaz," featured cover photos of Laws striking "various poses clutching automatic weapons," and whose songs included the now almost standard cop-killer lyrics: "'I loaded the clip and took the nine to the copper's brain.'" Fond of slugging down malt liquor from 40-ounce bottles, cursing out her audience, and boldly pronouncing in public her desire to kill, Laws spoke often of life on the streets. Her menacing persona, and the gritty "art" it had produced, had arisen apparently from her experiences as gang member, drug pusher, and prison inmate.

As it happens, Laws had never been in jail, nor could her other mean-street stories be verified. She wasn't in fact *born* a gangster but delivered to two protective parents who raised her in a comfortable, middle-class Detroit neighborhood. There, she had been educated in Catholic schools and had been the beneficiary of lessons in ballet, modern dance, and piano. Laws also had attended church and gone to college, where she had majored in business and had become a fraternity sweetheart.

Majoring in business is probably the most significant biographical detail in that privileged list. As Laws herself said to Pulley in defense of her new persona: "I'm both a gangster and a smart business person. I know what I'm doing." Indeed, she did. That she chose to entitle her first album "Born Gangstaz," rather than something more biographically accurate, such as "Born Bourgeois," tells us much about the selling of popular art through faux rebellion, the reinvention of self as commercial product, and the inherent amorality of marketing on the postmodern stage.

In the Christian faith within which Laws was raised, being "born again" meant having one's soul realigned with the experience of the divine and a subsequent obedience to the laws of God. In the consumerist faith that has taken its place as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the primary shaper of public behavior, being "born again" means reshaping one's image according to the fashions of the Market, obedient to its laws of publicity and promotion.

Relativism and capitalism

"Born Gangstaz" provides a useful and sobering transition out of stereotype. The careerist maneuvers of Boss Laws remind us that although we have come to expect the proselytizing of immaturity, vulgarity, and violence from the entertainment industry, it is still, in fact, an industry. Like any industry in postmodern America, the primary beneficiaries of pop music's offensive values are both the investing rich and a highly diversified professional class: lawyers, publicists, accountants, graphic artists, marketing and computer consultants, all rationally and efficiently assisting in the creation of a product, the core values of which are (in the case of Boss Laws) irrational and anarchic.

This professional assistance, it is important to remember, is usually provided without any self-conscious political or social intent. We cannot presume, for example, that the large cast of co-conspirators listed above consists primarily of misguided liberals, much less self-proclaimed anarchists—a group that seems to reside almost exclusively now in academic tenure dens and the tony galleries of art investors. Many a conservative's stock portfolio has been fattened, and soccer mom's all-terrain vehicle financed, through supporting clients like Calvin Klein. And would anyone really be surprised if the tobacco company that was flattering feminism through its Virginia Slims campaign was simultaneously contributing to the reelection coffers of Jesse Helms? The ethos of commerce—with its scientific methods pressed to monetary ends, with its strict rationalism placed in the service of a narrow materialism—has neither the language nor the appetite for such scrupulous discriminations. Rather, its democracy of profit wants to decree that all money is good money while its standard of service wants to insist that the customer is always right.

When practiced in moderation, these commercial ideals of toleration and solicitude are indeed necessary for a civil, democratic marketplace. But when the market expands to enclose the whole of society so that even the most intimate of activi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ties becomes economically defined, when the primary shapers of allowable behavior are the imperatives of the bottom line, then toleration gives way to decadent license, civil solicitude to venal solicitation, as everything becomes "good" and anything "right." So enclosed, we can rationalize the most offensive of behaviors. Access to the morgue photos of a murdered child, JonBenet, becomes yet one more entrepreneurial opportunity, their purchase and publication justified under the banners of "freedom of expression" and the public's "right to know."

How has such moral relativism come to define our social sphere? The answer is both so pervasive and near that it is hard for us to see: Relativism is the standard operating procedure of scientific capitalism, the working premise of commercial life. To say so is merely to restate the premises of capitalism's cultural contradictions, and show again how the Producing Self has become complicit with, and dependent on, the depredations of the Consuming Self.

Postmodern parenting

As a last example of the insidious effects of these economically shaped identities, I want to return to parenting and balance the "rash" with a "rational" model. Let's imagine a slightly upscale, much more admirably motivated version of the family mentioned on the first page: a white, married, Midwest couple, college educated, with two preteenage children, Adam and Amy. Although both parents now work full-time, the mother gladly stayed home a full year after each child's birth and then relentlessly sought out the very best child care, regardless of price. In fact, committed to both gender equality and responsible parenthood, this couple had planned to alternate working half-time until Amy reached junior high. But when the father's company was downsized, he had to take on more work rather than less, and although the mother was still willing to sacrifice the career advantage of full-time employment, they found that, without the extra income, they couldn't afford a home in the community with the best public schools. So she extended her hours—as did the father, for his commute was lengthened an hour each day after the move.

Such sacrifices are, in fact, characteristic of this couple.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They have no desire to take impulsive vacations free of their children's company. To the contrary, their fondest fantasy, discussed over takeout dinners or whispered above the soundtrack of the children's Friday night video, is to have a more relaxed and natural family life. But everything they read, including the President's speeches, and their own employment experiences together warn them that their children must be highly trained to survive the changes that the new economy is likely to require. So they take out a loan to buy the very best home computers, which they upgrade, then upgrade again. When Adam has trouble learning to read, they send him to a nationally franchised Sylvan Learning Center for after-school training and then to a private tutor who specializes in dyslexia. When Amy shows ability in math, it only seems fair that they offer her tutoring as well, so they send her to the local Kumon Math Center (also nationally franchised) and pay for skating lessons as well.

All of this, of course, means more expense and less time spent together, but they try to adjust by using cell phones and e-mail to stay in touch. Furthermore, Adam and Amy are guaranteed "quality time" on the weekend (there's a sign-up sheet over the microwave): four full hours when each gets to choose favorite activities and special foods, when each has the right to be "spoiled" by the intensity of their parents' total attention. The couple also attends every conference, game, and performance they can. There, too, the intensity of their attention doesn't flag; there, as their children's passionate advocates, they work "the system"—lobby teachers, network neighbors, argue with refs—whatever it takes to wrest the best for Amy and Adam.

I could go on, but the portrait is complete enough and, perhaps, painfully familiar. What I find so insidious here is the extent to which the totality of domestic life is being shaped by economic models, motives, fears, and values: how much the grimly anxious pace of the postmodern workplace has come to command the postmodern household. And, of course, for clarity's sake, I have removed all the potentially corrupting effects of contemporary consumerism, the hedonistic half of the mixed message the economy presents. Statistically speaking, this is a uniquely ascetic postmodern couple. Here, we

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

have no divorce, infidelity, rampant careerism; no alcoholism, drug addiction, compulsive shopping or gambling—none of the many forms of self-centered dysfunction that darken our day and rend family life. Here, we have nothing so rash, just a perversely rational schedule of pervasive separation, a desertion of one's own children "on their behalf."

This household has been purged of sexist inequalities, but it has also been stripped of wonder, curiosity, improvisational fun. Mother and father have merged into one cooperative, unisexual provider. The good parent has been reduced to the Good Producer whose job as parent is to supply society with a new generation of good producers—i.e., employees who are already accustomed to highly rationalized social environments and whose skills are upgraded to the ever-evolving specs of the time. The new parent doesn't teach by example; he hires tutors, coaches, experts "in the field." His role is less to cherish and chasten than to outfit and facilitate; less to shape meaning than to make money, furnishing each child with all the materialist gear and rationalist techniques the economy requires.

Even this household's happier moments have been reinvented in the economy's terms. The notion of prescheduled "quality time," for example, converts parenting to corporate standards of executive efficiency. As in the rest of the technological economy, enhanced technique is supposed to reduce the need for management "face time," leading to an implicitly absurd rationalization by which, nevertheless, many of us now run our lives. We believe that the better parents we are, the less time we actually will spend with our children. The parent as passionate advocate—the one lobbying hard on her child's behalf without broader concerns for truth, justice, or even common courtesy—is likewise a rote reenactment of workplace roles, especially as defined by the ever-expanding service domain. Such behavior accurately reflects the highly specialized code of conduct—the so-called professional ethics—of the lawyer, the therapist, the consultant, or the licensed accountant whose firm does the books for both a local church and an S&M supply house. Our job at home, like our job in the field, is not to reprimand but to represent. All clients are good clients. Our children have become our customers, and the customer is always right.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Lost havens and lost virtues

When our children become our clients, then even the family has ceased to be a possible sphere for moral instruction. When our domestic rituals are set to the beat and drawn toward the goals of our workaday schedules, then home itself ceases to be a sanctuary. Even at night, we have no respite from the anxieties of the marketplace where the buyer must beware and only the fittest are supposed to survive. Even in our living rooms, we find no alternative to the economy's reductive, yet contradictory, commands to *produce* and *consume*, *produce* and *consume*. The strict division that Wemmick drew—the symbolic border that allowed him to be productive at work and humane at home—has been dissolved. Today's Wemmick has no place where he can be generous and genial, no time to be metaphysically curious, humanly kind. The old compromise with the wealth-producing engine of scientific capitalism has collapsed. Although small, lightly armored, and comically appointed, Wemmick's house was still an effective castle, but that castle has now been sacked.

Our current distress arises, in part, from an inarticulate sense that we have lost that last bastion of our humanity, what Christopher Lasch called our "haven in a heartless world." And the best measure of the dread that such a loss can excite is our urgent attempt now to rebuild the moat of separateness: more private schools to teach, more guards to police, a new maze of walled-in communities. Once again we circle our wagons in suburban cul-de-sacs, where, ever anxious, we stare out at the world through tinted glass. But physical removal is an insufficient defense when the hearts and minds of the family we would protect, adult and child alike, have been aligned to the values of the very world we are trying to escape.

Those values are intrinsically hostile to the disciplined tenderness that makes a meaningful haven out of a merely physical house. In truth, the economy that now pervades American life does not "want" people who are capable of creating and sustaining the rituals of domesticity. It wants instead, and paradoxically, pure rationalists and pure materialists; it wants efficient producers and avid consumers. And even if we could harmonize its increasingly contradictory demands for perfect

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

efficiency and unending appetite, the merged model could only supply an impoverished definition of human life. Acting out of such a model, which reduces us to the "mechanical" and the "animal," we still could not mature into a fully competent, deeply caring, communally committed adulthood. If we wish to become such adults—and most of us still profess that we do—we need to admit, then, not only scientific capitalism's internal contradictions but its ultimate insufficiency as the primary shaper of our daily behavior. We need to confront the very specific ways in which its regimens for profitability are hostile to the cultivation of maturity's most necessary traits.

Maturity requires both the acquisition of a broad, commonsense intelligence and a commitment to truth-telling. The economy rewards instead both the narrow expertise of producership and the utopian fantasies of salesmanship with its commodified dreams of omniscience, omnipotence, immortality. Maturity requires emotional endurance. The new economy promotes the habit of complaint; it hypes the latest "injustice" or psychic pain, which then can be medicated, adjudicated, serviced for a fee.

Maturity requires the selflessness of social commitment; the economy promotes the selfishness of "self-liberation." Maturity depends on a transfer of tradition between the generations through daily example. The economy eradicates tradition through insisting that the new is always improved, and it segregates the generations—into day-care, workplace, retirement communities—for more efficient service and marketing.

Maturity directs the submission of both physical desires and intellectual schemes to the discipline of higher meaning. The postmodern economy co-opts and consumes all traditional forms of meaningfulness. It relentlessly converts quality into quantity, spirit into commodity, the organism of symbolism into the mechanism of market value, the self-sacrificial hero into the sponsoring star.

Maturity requires, above all, a meaningful acceptance of the human condition. It depends on our acknowledging those facts which remain the same for every culture and generation, uniting the first with the last: that death is real; that our knowledge is limited; that even in an age of technological

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

advance our rational control (both as individuals and as a community) remains provisional—that, in the words of Ecclesiastes, "time and chance happen to us all." Not only do common sense, compassion, and self-discipline emerge out of an acceptance of those first and final facts, so does humility. And humility is the necessary temperamental grounding for any system of ethics aspiring to be practical—aspiring, that is, to shape our beliefs in actual practice. As the temperament that (to use a carpenter's term) constantly trues us to the shape of the real, humility is the source of the most profound sort of pragmatism—a fact that our earliest American ancestors well knew.

"Every man has just as much and no more truth in him, as he hath humility," wrote a New England Puritan. Where, we might ask, in this economy of rank self-promotion and rational utopias, can such a truthful man or woman be found? The relative rarity of such a person illuminates why, for all the multiplication of our material wealth and the explosion of our rational knowledge, this postindustrial society of ours seems so shallow, so phony—not only immature but fundamentally false.

Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart

At the very end of the *Protestant Ethic*, Max Weber briefly emerged from his sober and objective analysis to speculate on the coming character of the West's iron cage of capitalist endeavor. "No one knows," he wrote:

> who will live in this cage in the future, or whether at the end of this tremendous development entirely new prophets will arise, or whether there will be a great rebirth of old ideas and ideals, or, if neither, mechanized petrification, embellished with a sort of convulsive self-importance. For of the last stage of this cultural development, it might truly be said: Specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines that it has attained a level of civilization never before achieved.

As with "convulsive self-importance," we now proclaim America's global dominance, we might wonder at the extent to which we have achieved just such a nullity: a society of both rational and rash immaturity; a civilization of "specialists without spirit, sensualists without heart." For their eloquence as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well as their prophetic accuracy, these words of Weber, written at the very start of the twentieth century, are frequently cited. Few note, however, the unintended irony of the very next sentence: "But this brings us to the world of judgments of value and of faith, with which this purely historical study need not be burdened."

We now have had a full century of such intellectual purity—a hundred years of purely historical, purely financial, purely aesthetic, purely scientific study and practice. Yet that very "world of judgments" which such practices would shun, is not apart from, but encoded within, all human activity. The purging of value—this vaunted purity of rationalized study—is a fiction. Historically, it has been a very useful fiction. It has allowed us to imagine ourselves apart from the world so that we might see it more sharply and to achieve, as a consequence, a series of truly astonishing technological triumphs. But, as the narrow compass of that fiction has become all-pervasive, its temporary respite from value has stretched instead into a kind of permanent estrangement. As domain after domain has been converted to its strategic pretense of objectivity, we have become enclosed within an interlocking maze of morally opaque systems, places, methodologies. Trapped inside this ethical blind, customized to its selective unawareness, our actions and beliefs begin to divide, and we lose "all sense" of both how we are behaving and why.

To open that blind and reinfuse our overly rationalized sites and minds with the "world of judgments" can indeed, as Weber observed, become a burden; for it threatens us with a renewed awareness that most of our actions are, in fact, judgments of value, and so reminds us that neither the regimens of expertise nor the fantasies of self-esteem can exempt us from the constant accountability of the moral life. To readmit that world is also dangerous, for if done in the wrong spirit—which is to say, if our judging is not trued by humility—we will only poison the air with more of the self-righteous scorn that has characterized the "gotcha game" of the culture wars. But surveying our scene of rash and rational immaturity, I am convinced that now is the time to embrace that burden and to brave the danger. Now is the time to recover those practices and refashion those places where, as in Wemmick's castle, "the judgments of value and of faith" have a home.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Pedophilia and the culture wars

G. E. ZURIFF

DR. Laura was outraged. The widely syndicated talk radio guru devoted her March 22 radio show, with an estimated audience of 18 million listeners, as well as a May 12 news conference, to an attack on "garbage science" and those who would "sexualize our children, normalize pedophilia, and further destroy the family." The target of her anger was the venerable American Psychological Association (APA), with 80,000 members, the largest organization of its kind in the world.

Politicians were not far behind. At a May news conference, Majority Whip Tom Delay, sponsor of the Child Abuse Prevention and Enforcement Act, denounced the organization, while Representative Dave Weldon attacked what he called a "prime example of what happens when we, as a society, subscribe to the theory" that there are no absolutes. His Republican colleague Matt Salmon proposed a resolution condemning the APA by implication, a resolution the APA feared would easily pass if brought to the House floor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The trigger for all this fury was a technical article appearing in the prestigious *Psychological Bulletin*, published by the APA, with the rather forbidding title, "A Meta-Analytic Examination of Assumed Properties of Child Sexual Abuse Using College Samples," authored by three academics at major educational institutions: Bruce Rind (Temple University), Robert Bauserman (University of Michigan), and Philip Tromovitch (University of Pennsylvania). They reviewed and analyzed the data from 59 previous studies of college students who reported experiences of childhood sexual abuse. Surprisingly, the researchers found that childhood sexual abuse does not generally cause lasting psychological harm. Students who had experienced childhood sexual abuse were, on average, only slightly less well adjusted than other comparable students, and these differences generally disappeared when family environment was taken into account. In the case of males, there was no difference in psychological adjustment between the two groups if the sexual experience was not coerced.

At first blush, this might seem to be good news. Given the estimated 14 percent of college males and 27 percent of college females who have experienced childhood sexual abuse, one might welcome the finding that these youngsters were not impaired for life and can enjoy normal psychological adjustment. However, at the recommendation of the journal editors, the authors drew additional conclusions. Noting that the term "abuse" implies that harm is inflicted, the authors argued that classifying behavior as "abuse" merely because it is considered illegal or immoral, even in the absence of harm, is not scientifically valid. To so label it also conflates instances in which the sexual experience inflicts harm with those instances in which it does not, thereby complicating the task of determining what characteristics of the experience produce psychological harm. Moreover, they note, in many, and perhaps most, cases of sexual activity between an adult and a minor, there is no physical or emotional harm to the child.

Indeed, two-thirds of the males and more than one-fourth of the females retrospectively reported having neutral or positive reactions to the sexual experience at the time it occurred, while 42 percent of the males viewed the sexual experiences as positive when reflecting back on them. Accordingly, the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

authors suggest that the term "childhood sexual abuse" be restricted to situations in which the sexual activity is unwanted by the minor and is experienced negatively. In contrast, when the minor willingly engages in the sexual encounter and has positive reactions, the activity should be labeled simply "adult-child sex" or "adult-adolescent sex," value neutral terms.

It is not difficult to see how these ideas would antagonize not only Dr. Laura but the public at large. By lifting the pejorative designation "sexual abuse" from many instances of adult-child sex, and by reporting that this activity is often harmless and even viewed positively by the minor, the article seemed to condone such behavior. To be sure, the authors explicitly stated that the absence of harm does not imply the absence of wrongfulness, but that caveat was lost on critics like Dr. Laura and Tom Delay or those who celebrated the findings. For example, the North American Man-Boy Love Association, the major pedophilia advocacy group, hailed the report as "good news," bolstering their claims that consensual sex between men and boys is not harmful, may be beneficial, and should be legalized.

The APA's radical reversal

If the public's outcry was to be expected, the response of the APA to the attacks was surprising. Disowning the article in a letter to Delay, the association rejected the article's basic conclusions, stating that they were contrary to the public-policy positions of the APA. Furthermore, the association acknowledged that it had failed to evaluate the article before publication for its "potential for misinforming the public policy process." Consequently, in an unprecedented move, the association announced that it will seek independent expert evaluation of the article and will publish the results of this review. The association also promised Delay that it will institute procedures to assure that its journal editors will evaluate papers for their social-policy implications as well as their scientific merit.

But most surprising of all, the APA's decision to side with the article's critics radically reverses the role it has played in the assault on the primacy of the traditional nuclear family over the past quarter century. Generally speaking, the tradi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tional nuclear family consists of two adults, one male, one female, who signify their commitment to one another by marriage, and the offspring of their sexual union. Sexual relations are restricted to those between the two adults. In addition, the family is a hierarchy with the adults exerting more power and authority than the children, and the father exerting more than the mother. Finally, labor is divided along gender lines, with the females responsible for more of the domestic and child-care duties and the males more responsible for work outside the home, providing income and protection for the family.

The political and cultural Left has attacked and undermined the primacy of the traditional nuclear family on a number of grounds. Foremost among its criticism is that this family ideal, as the embodiment of patriarchy and male privilege, is sexist. Males wield the most power while subordinating and oppressing women. In the patriarchal family, gender roles are learned that keep women at home, preventing them from pursuing serious careers. In short, all the vices of patriarchy are planted and grown in the traditional nuclear family. The charge is also made that because men possess the most power, they are free to exploit, beat, and rape women and children. Domestic violence is the direct result of the traditional family's patriarchal structure. Finally, in the eyes of the Left, societal preference for the traditional nuclear family is objectionable because such a family violates the rights of others. For example, homosexual adults are legally forbidden from marriage and, in some states, from adopting children. Single mothers are also stigmatized, and because single-mother families are disproportionally headed by African Americans, the insistence on the traditional family as the societal ideal is racist in addition to being sexist and homophobic.

In its assault on the importance of the traditional nuclear family, the Left has established an intellectual alliance with the mental-health profession. An excellent illustration of the profession's role is the fight for homosexual rights waged during the 1970s. One of the most important barriers to the social acceptance of homosexuals was the fact that homosexuality was considered a mental disorder by the mental-health profession. During the early 1970s, gay activists, through an

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

intense campaign of lobbying, demonstrations, and disruptions, forced the profession to reconsider its stand. Subsequently, in 1974, homosexuality was dropped from the American Psychiatric Association's list of mental disorders, and the APA soon followed suit. In the profession's deliberations on this issue, one body of psychological evidence carried great weight. A number of studies had shown that homosexuality was not associated with any increased incidence of psychopathology. In fact, it was found that many homosexual adults were leading well-adjusted, fulfilling lives. In short, homosexuality had no harmful psychological effects.

Of course, this line of reasoning leaves open the question of whether homosexuality, in and of itself, is a psychopathology. Nevertheless, the argument that homosexuality has no harmful effects played a major role in the decision to normalize homosexuality. Once homosexuality was no longer a mental disorder, the fight for equal rights and protections for homosexuals was strengthened. Homosexual adults had a legitimate claim to the right to marry and to adopt children—in short, to form families.

The therapeutic logic

The Left's successes in legitimizing homosexuality set the pattern for subsequent attacks on the traditional family over the next quarter century, and it is therefore worthwhile to examine the logic at play. First, a traditional societal structure (e.g., the heterosexual family) is found defective because it is sexist, homophobic, racist, or in some way oppressive to a group favored by the Left, and an alternative (e.g., the homosexual family) is proposed. This alternative is touted as not only more just and equitable but also as beneficial, or at least not harmful, to society. Enter the psychological professions. To show that the proposed change is not harmful, social scientists undertake research to examine its effects. Typically, this research consists of a comparison of the psychological adjustment of individuals living under the alternative social structure (e.g., homosexual subjects) with that of individuals living according to the conventional or traditional ideal (e.g., heterosexual subjects). When, as is most often the case, the research shows that there are no differences between the groups

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

or, occasionally, that psychological adjustment is superior under the alternative, the traditional ideal is rejected.

Supporters of the traditional family find themselves on the defensive, forced to choose between two difficult options. On the one hand, they can continue to insist that, contrary to the scientific evidence, the alternative is harmful, in which case they can be dismissed as ignorant, antiscience know-nothings. On the other hand, they can assert that the alternative, although not harmful, is still wrong because it is "unnatural," "contrary to the Divine Plan," or "immoral." But then their defense is rejected as based on mere nostalgia, folklore, prejudice, or fear of change, all of which is, in turn, a mask for the patriarchal defense of white, male privilege.

At issue here is whether there are moral standards beyond the utilitarian calculation of observable physical or psychological harm. Appeals to such standards are based on what might be termed moral intuitions—that is, irreducible intuitions about right and wrong, intuitions derived from fundamental aspects of the human psyche, human history, or, if the evolutionary psychologists are right, from the evolution of the human species. Whereas moral intuition is the foundation of society for the traditionalists, it is mere patriarchal prejudice for the Left.

Based on its rejection of moral intuition, the Left has used the findings of psychological research to support its assault on the primacy of the traditional nuclear family. Over the past two decades, numerous studies have shown that women with careers outside the home are psychologically better adjusted than their home-bound peers, that the children of these women are also psychologically healthy, and that nonparental day-care arrangements are not detrimental to children's mental development. Because lack of harmfulness is equated with lack of wrongfulness, these findings have assuaged the conscience of the working mother. Similarly, psychological research has demonstrated that the effects of divorce on children are not as serious as was once thought, especially when children of divorce are compared to children living in conflict ridden marriages. Consequently, spouses in unfulfilling marriages, who at one time might have remained in the marriage for the "sake of the children," can now feel that divorce is the moral choice. In yet another example, psychologists have found that abor-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion does not generally produce grave psychological consequences for women, thereby undermining one of the arguments against abortion.

One of the best illustrations of the role of psychology in the critique of the nuclear family appears in the June issue of the *American Psychologist*, the flagship journal of the APA. In this article, the authors, Louise Silverman and Carl Auerbach, challenge the belief that a father is essential for positive child development. Citing a variety of data, they conclude that not only is a father not essential but neither is a mother. According to these scholars, "Children need at least one responsible caretaking adult [of either gender] who has a positive emotional connection to them and with whom they have a consistent relationship." Although they concede that for practical reasons it is helpful to have a second adult caregiver, they argue that the two caregivers need not be of the opposite sex, married, or even biologically related to the child for him or her to develop good mental health. Predictably, the authors view the traditional value placed on a two-parent home as mere prejudice. In their words, "The emphasis on the essential importance of fathers and heterosexual marriage represents ... an attempt to reassert the cultural hegemony of traditional values, such as heterocentrism, Judeo-Christian marriage, and male power and privilege."

Why did the APA blink?

After 25 years of this sort of research, what is left standing of the traditional nuclear family? Gone are heterosexuality, the necessity for two parents, marriage, gendered division of labor, hierarchy of power, and biological relatedness. Remaining is a mere shadow of the former family—a stable, emotionally connected adult caregiver of either gender and a child, who do not have sex with one another.

This brings us full circle to the original Rind, Bauserman, and Tromovitch article on pedophilia. In arguing that child-adult sexual relations are usually not harmful to the child, these scholars appeared to stand at the next frontier for deconstructing the family, the prohibition against sex within the family. Can a psychologically healthy and therefore societally sanctioned family consist of a child and a stable, emo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tionally supportive pedophile? The APA peered into this abyss and backed off. Why?

This question is actually two questions. First, why did the APA not stand behind the editorial integrity of the world-renowned *Psychological Bulletin* and simply say, as did Rind, Bauserman, and Tromovitch, that lack of harmfulness does not imply lack of wrongfulness, that although pedophilia may often be psychologically harmless, it is nevertheless wrong and should remain illegal and socially unacceptable? The answer to this first question is not difficult to discern. For the APA to admit that judgments of morality may be independent of psychological adjustment would be to admit that moral intuition does indeed play a critical role in social policy, that psychological studies do not fully determine what is good. To admit this, however, is to grant that although homosexuality, single-mother families, sex between adolescents, out-of-wedlock births, the rearing of children in daycare, abortion, and divorce do not cause psychological harm, they may nevertheless be wrong. In the end, the APA could not turn its back on a quarter century of social-policy positions.

Answering the second question is more difficult: Why didn't the APA declare that pedophilia, like abortion, homosexuality, and single-mother families, has now been shown to be psychologically harmless? Why did it not urge that society cease its oppression of a minority stigmatized merely because its sexual orientation happens to conflict with society's prejudices? At the political level, the answer to this question is simple. Winning the favor of the North American Man-Boy Love Association does not compensate for alienating most of the U.S. population as well as the Federal government, which regulates the practice of psychotherapy and professional associations, including the APA, controls Medicare and other insurance payments for psychological treatment, and funds psychological research and training. Opposing Congress on this issue was a losing proposition for the APA. Nevertheless, the APA's response was not dictated by political considerations alone, and a full analysis of the APA's position reveals basic internal ideological contradictions that more completely explain the APA's public response.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Misleading explanations

Consider the reasons the APA itself gave to justify its reaction. First, the APA declared that child-adult sex "should never be considered harmless." This claim, of course, begs the question, since the article the APA attacked provided evidence to the contrary. The APA sounds here not unlike those who say that contrary to the research evidence, homosexuality should never be considered harmless. Second, the APA argued that children cannot consent to sexual activity with adults. This response is particularly disingenuous coming from an organization that filed an amicus curiae brief with the U.S. Supreme Court opposing Minnesota's law requiring notification of parents when a minor decides to have an abortion. In that brief, the APA argued, "By age 14 most adolescents have developed adult-like intellectual and social capacities including specific abilities ... for understanding treatment alternatives, considering risks and benefits, and giving legally competent consent, ... and there are some 11- to 13-year-olds who possess adult-like capabilities." If the APA believes that youngsters can give informed consent for a surgical procedure why can't those same youngsters consent to sex with an adult, especially since this may consist of nothing more than the exposure of genitals?

At a more fundamental level, the APA's contention that children cannot consent to sexual activity with an adult raises a deeper question. Why is consent necessary? After all, we bathe children, change their diapers, hug and kiss them, wash their genitals, perform surgery on them, all without their consent. Furthermore, there are cultures in which man-boy homosexual relationships are institutionalized and others in which woman-girl sex is accepted. But one need not wander so far: When adolescents in our society experiment with sex among themselves, the APA does not object on the grounds that teens are incapable of giving consent. To insist that sex with an adult, although harmless, is special and requires consent is to appeal to the kind of moral intuition or principle that the APA has rejected time after time.

Speaking for the APA, Rhea Faberman, its Director of Communications, offered yet another reason for the organization's position. "Pedophilia is a mental disorder," she stressed. Un-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fortunately, Faberman has not kept up with the reformers' recent successes. Along with homosexuality, pedophilia per se has been dropped from the latest edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* of the American Psychiatric Association, the official listing of mental disorders. For a pedophile to be diagnosed with a mental disorder, it is necessary that the sexual urges or behaviors cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning. Consequently, a pedophile does not meet the criteria for a mental disorder if he has managed to stay clear of law enforcement agencies, has maintained a job and social contacts, and is not distressed by his pedophilia.

Ideological contradictions

Clearly, the reasons the APA offers for its position cannot constitute the full story. Both their position and the reasons given for it are reversals of the APA's long standing ideology. Perhaps another reason lurks beneath the surface. As was suggested above, the core of the Left's dissatisfaction with the traditional nuclear family is that it is patriarchal: The father wields power over the wife and children, endangering their physical, sexual, and emotional well-being. Any evidence challenging this thesis threatens the very essence of the Left's critique of the traditional family and is strongly resisted. For example, feminists have fiercely contested two decades of research by the Family Violence Research Program at the University of New Hampshire showing that women have as high an incidence of domestic violence as men. Similarly, evidence of high levels of domestic violence between gay or lesbian partners has been ignored. If the traditional family is no more unsafe than the alternatives, then the attack on the traditional family loses some of its force.

Similarly, the Rind, Bauserman, and Tromovitch study could be seen as yet another blow to the image of the traditional family as a danger zone. If father-child sex is not as harmful as had been thought, the traditional family is not as dangerous as thought. Perhaps this was a conclusion the APA could not endorse and may have contributed to its decision to call for a temporary truce in the culture wars; however, this truce is merely a tactical one, imposed on the APA by powerful politi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cal forces and by deep contradictions within its own ideology. Because the APA has yet to recognize the legitimacy of moral intuition in formulating social policy, the cultural battles will continue on other fronts.

Morality's place

The controversy surrounding the study reveals not only the ideologically driven process by which the organized mental-health profession formulates social policy but also the nature of contemporary public discourse about our fundamental values. For the most part, the Left's utilitarian ethics has framed the dialogue. Debates center on what is best medically, economically, psychologically—how to reduce crime, teenage births, drug use, welfare dependence; how to enhance education, career training, health, emotional adjustment, and productivity. In this framework, it is easy to equate morality with psychological and economic development and to leave questions of public policy to the social scientists.

That would be a mistake. What the uproar over the Rind, Bauserman, and Tromovitch article has demonstrated, and what the APA has yet to acknowledge, is that society must abide by its moral intuitions, however vague they may be. Indeed, even the utilitarian calculus is not possible without moral intuition, for it is moral intuition that informs us what goods and evils belong in the calculus and what weights to assign to each. Even the concept of "psychological adjustment" is itself derived from moral notions of what constitutes the good life. Certainly, in a pluralistic society it may be easier to agree on the psychological effects of a social change than on whether it is moral. And to be sure, one person's moral intuition is often another's bigotry. But for that reason alone, these moral intuitions must be included in our civic discourse, so that we can recognize them, debate them, and look to them for guidance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Welfare reform and reducing teen pregnancy

ISABEL V. SAWHILL

ALMOST no one thinks it's a good idea for unwed teenagers to become parents. It would be the odd parent, indeed, who counseled their own teenage son or daughter to start a family. Most parents hope that their children will finish school, find a job, and marry before they take on the burdens of parenthood. But what the majority of parents, almost regardless of race or social class, want for their own children is not what we have. Instead, 40 percent of all girls in the United States become pregnant before their twentieth birthday, and one out of every five goes on to become a teen mother. The overwhelming majority of these young mothers are unmarried and end up poor and on welfare.

Certainly, recent social trends are encouraging. Teen pregnancy rates have declined almost as sharply during the 1990s as they had increased in the preceding two decades. And for the first time, teen birth rates are dropping not because more teens are having abortions but because fewer of them are getting pregnant in the first place.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

These recent declines auger well for the future, but it is worth remembering that teenage pregnancy rates in America are still at least twice as high as in other industrialized countries and about as high as they were in the early 1970s. About half of these pregnancies are carried to term while the remainder either end with a miscarriage or are terminated by an abortion. Very few teen mothers put their babies up for adoption, or marry the baby's father, a marked departure from practices 30 or 40 years ago.

When members of Congress enacted the new welfare law in 1996, they put at least as much emphasis on reducing teen and out-of-wedlock pregnancy as they did on requiring work. Yet states have been reluctant to take up this challenge, preferring to emphasize job placement and other strategies designed to move recipients into the workforce. In my view, that's shortsighted: Much greater attention should be given to encouraging young people to defer childbearing until they are ready to be parents. This will not be an easy task, of course. But states are now flush with funds, and some of this money ought to be invested in pregnancy-prevention programs for teenagers and in policies that reconnect fathers with their children. In the absence of such efforts, welfare reform's current success could be short-lived. If every recipient who finds a job is replaced by a younger sister ill-prepared to support a family, caseload declines will be difficult to sustain.

The strong economy has helped states to reduce welfare rolls by almost 50 percent since 1993. But the good times may not last. And when they end, it will be especially important to have in place policies that prevent young women from coming on to the rolls because of an unplanned pregnancy and birth. Even when such single parents work, they rarely have the education needed to support a family, and most will end up in low-wage, often dead-end jobs. Most of their children, whether on or off welfare, will remain poor.

Child poverty's new face

Poverty in the United States, especially child poverty, is increasingly associated with family structure. In the mid 1960s, when the War on Poverty began and Senator Daniel P. Moynihan, then an assistant secretary in the Department of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Labor, issued his "infamous" report on illegitimacy and poverty within the black community, only 35 percent of all poor children lived in female-headed families. Today, that figure stands at almost 60 percent, and by some counts is even higher.

The proportion of all American children who are poor has been increasing—from 15 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1996. Most of this increase is associated with the growth of single-parent families. The arithmetic behind this conclusion is straightforward. Because child poverty is five times higher in single-parent than in two-parent families, and because the proportion of all children living in fatherless families has increased dramatically, child poverty rates have increased by about five percentage points since 1970 for this reason alone.

It is not just the growth of female-headed families but also shifts in the composition of this group of single parents that have contributed to greater poverty and welfare dependency. In the 1960s and 1970s, most of the growth of single-parent families was caused by increases in divorce. In the 1980s and 1990s, all of the increase has been driven by out-of-wedlock childbearing. Currently, 32 percent of all children in the United States are born outside of marriage. The proportion is over half in many of our largest cities and close to that now in several states (e.g., Louisiana and Mississippi). Unmarried mothers tend to be younger and more disadvantaged than their divorced counterparts; as a result, they and their children are even more likely to be poor.

Finally, although out-of-wedlock childbearing is now common among women in their twenties, about half of unmarried mothers *begin* childbearing in their teens. So if we want to reduce such births and the poverty that accompanies them, the adolescent years are a good place to start. Not only are the consequences more dire for young girls, many of whom have not yet completed school, but these young women are less likely to marry and more likely to have additional children than those who delay parenting to a later age. The children in such families suffer the most: They are likely to have even poorer health, less success in school, and more behavioral problems than children born to older parents.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Public policy and the culture wars

In the struggle against child poverty, the nation faces some difficult choices. We can make it easier for unwed mothers to raise children on their own by providing them with better education, wage supplements (such as the Earned Income Tax Credit), subsidized health insurance and child care, or other supports. Since no amount of moralizing about out-of-wedlock childbearing will change the lives of those mothers who are already struggling to raise children on their own, such aid is warranted. But looking to the future, we should encourage young people to postpone childbearing until they are married or at least prepared to support their children. Indeed, too much emphasis on supporting single-parent families at the expense of efforts to slow their growth could encourage the very trends that have left so many children in fatherless families.

The goal among those concerned about the breakdown of the family should be to discourage both too early childbearing and childbearing outside of marriage. Very early childbearing, even were it to occur within marriage, is detrimental. Such families are quite unstable, and early childbearing prevents young parents from attaining the high levels of education that are necessary to compete in today's economy. But we should also recognize that the breakdown of marriage as the normative context for raising children may have consequences for our society that are at least as profound as the age at which childbearing begins. Indeed, the teen birth rate is far lower now than it was in the 1950s. What is new is the proportion of these very early births that occur to unmarried women and the fact that single parenting has lost its stigma.

The disappearance of marriage is already far advanced in many low-income and minority communities. Liberals point to the lack of good jobs in such communities, a situation they believe has undermined the male role as bread winner. Conservatives emphasize the availability of welfare benefits, arguing that these have encouraged young women to raise children on their own. Neither explanation is strongly backed by the data, but this may be because standard social-science models cannot easily capture the dynamics of the process that has led to the breakdown of the family. For whatever reasons, mo-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nogamy is being replaced by what a team of researchers from Columbia and Princeton universities calls "fragile families." Preliminary evidence from this team's work in several cities suggests that about half of young mothers who give birth out of wedlock are cohabiting with the father of their child at the time of birth and that another 30 percent are "romantically involved." Past research suggests that such ties are not very durable, but some believe that were we to intervene at the time of the child's birth in ways that encouraged more involvement of the father it could make a difference. Offering subsidized jobs or other supports to those couples in which one parent is willing to work full-time, and both are willing to make a more durable commitment to their children, might make a difference.

In the meantime, we should emphasize reducing teen pregnancy and early childbearing, for this will surely improve the lives of children. Most early childbearing occurs outside of marriage (76 percent) and most out-of-wedlock childbearing starts in the teenage years. Divisive cultural battles about marriage will continue to lurk in the background, to be sure; but a good interim strategy that all sides should agree on is preventing early, unplanned births.

Welfare reform to the rescue?

The 1996 welfare reform bill is replete with language about the importance of reducing out-of-wedlock pregnancy and childbearing and restoring marriage as "the foundation of a successful society." And several of its provisions are aimed at achieving these objectives. First, the bill includes a requirement that teen mothers under the age of 18 live with their parents or in another supervised setting and remain in school. At the discretion of the state, minors can be denied all welfare benefits, an option that with a few exceptions most states have not chosen to implement. (The four that have implemented some variant of this are: Delaware, Arkansas, California, and Mississippi.)

Second, the welfare law provides an "illegitimacy bonus" to the five states with the biggest statewide drop in out-of-wedlock childbearing among all women, not just those on welfare or those who are teenagers. The drop must be accomplished

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

without any increase in abortion. The first bonuses, totalling $20 million per state, were awarded in the fall of 1999 to Alabama, California, the District of Columbia, Massachusetts, and Michigan, based on drops experienced from 1994-95 to 1996-97. Third, the bill provides new funding of $50 million a year for abstinence education programs to states willing to match every four dollars of federal funds with three dollars of state funds. The bill stipulates that the monies only be used for programs that advocate abstinence until marriage and do not teach about contraception.

Fourth, the bill emphasizes establishing paternity and enforcing the child-support obligations of absent parents. To that end, it requires employers to report all new hires to the child-support enforcement authorities for purposes of tracking down delinquent fathers. And other features of the bill call upon states to more vigorously enforce statutory rape laws and the Department of Health and Human Services to develop a strategy for preventing out-of-wedlock teen pregnancies. HHS is also charged with ensuring that 25 percent of all communities in the United States have a pregnancy-prevention program for teenagers. (No funds were provided for this purpose, but HHS claims that 30 percent of all communities have programs that meet the requirements of the law.)

Finally, the bill gives states great discretion in how they use their welfare monies, as long as they achieve the basic purposes of the Welfare Reform Act. For example, states are allowed to use the funds for teen-pregnancy prevention, family planning for those already on welfare, fatherhood programs, and other activities that might reduce teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock childbearing. The bill also permits states to impose a "family cap" (denial of benefits for children born or conceived while their mother is on welfare). Twenty-one states have chosen to impose such a cap (and two others provide flat grants, regardless of family size).

Overall, it is hard to argue that states have not been given most of the tools and incentives they need to reduce out-of-wedlock and teenage childbearing. I say most because the one area where states are still constrained, or have constrained themselves, is with respect to abortion. In addition, one of the bill's provisions—the abstinence money—has been highly con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

troversial with some reproductive-rights groups, which have urged states not to apply for the funds. But in the end, all states did. States also have the resources to tackle the problem of teenage childbearing. As of early 1999, they had $4.2 billion in unspent and uncommitted welfare funds, according to the Department of Health and Human Services, that could be devoted to this and other purposes (assuming Congress doesn't permanently rescind the money).

It is true that most pregnancy-prevention programs for teenagers have been inadequately evaluated and that there are no sure-fire solutions to the problem. However, many promising models have been identified. The best sex-education programs are comprehensive in coverage and factually accurate, though they are not necessarily "value-free." Indeed, they take a clear stance on the behaviors in question. They teach teenagers not just the facts of life but, more importantly, how to resist peer pressure. Other effective approaches include after-school programs, mentoring, and community service, all of which provide alternatives to early sex and pregnancy.

Hollow victory

How have states responded to this new emphasis on out-of-wedlock childbearing and the related provisions in the 1996 Act? At least two field studies of the implementation of the new law—one by the Rockefeller Institute at the State University of New York (SUNY) and one by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation—report that states have been far more comfortable with the work goals in the new law than with those that relate to childbearing and marriage. As the SUNY group explains, the ideological divide between those who favor abstinence education and those who advocate comprehensive sex education, including the possible distribution of contraceptives, is simply too great for states to reconcile. And thus they tend not to fund the programs, bumping controversial questions to the local level instead.

Nor are states devoting large sums of money to pregnancy prevention for teenagers. Among the 30 states that responded to a Child Trends survey in 1997, funds devoted to this end varied from zero to $79 million (California) with the median state spending a little over a million. Contrast this to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

average spent on welfare overall, which was about $460 million in this same year.

Despite the controversies involved, and the relatively small commitment of resources, states are doing more than they were prior to the enactment of the new law. For example, in a 1998 survey undertaken by the Alan Guttmacher Institute, 34 states and the District of Columbia reported that they had taken concrete steps to win the illegitimacy bonus. These efforts run the gamut from very modest to substantial and encompass everything from policies aimed at increasing contraceptive use among welfare recipients (Alabama, Kentucky, Montana, and Alaska) to reducing the number of teen pregnancies (South Carolina, Georgia, New York, and Arkansas). The teen-pregnancy prevention efforts typically encourage abstinence among teenagers but continue to provide family-planning services to those who are sexually active. There is little doubt, however, that the emphasis has shifted away from simply accepting sexual activity among teenagers as inevitable. Instead, many now believe that greater abstinence is a desirable and achievable goal, that articulating this goal is important, and that contraception should be viewed as a second, rather than a first, line of defense.

Hard-line advocates of abstinence continue to argue that talking about birth control undermines the efficacy of the abstinence message (a dubious proposition according to research on the question). And hard-line advocates of contraception still believe that teenage sex should be "normalized," despite polls showing that, at least where school-age teens are concerned, the public is overwhelmingly in favor of promoting abstinence (although they are *not* in favor of denying access to contraceptives). Reflecting these disagreements, as well as the tight constraints that Congress placed on use of the funds (no education about contraception), money for abstinence education has largely been used to fund relatively noncontroversial state media campaigns, after-school mentoring and other youth activities, and abstinence education for nine- to fourteen-year-olds.

Most of these efforts are relatively new, so it is too soon to know what their effects will be. But if states don't give high priority to the family-oriented goals articulated in the 1996

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

law, welfare reform may do little more than reshuffle poor mothers and their children between welfare and low-paid work or worse. With the help of a strong economy, states might successfully move existing recipients off the welfare rolls. But unless states also tend to those coming in the front door of the welfare system, this could be a hollow victory.

Some states and communities may have remained uninvolved because they believe that the problem is intractable—that we simply don't know how to reduce early pregnancies and births, and that, in particular, there is little that governments can do. A more optimistic view would stress that social trends are not linear and that an event like the enactment of welfare reform or the AIDS crisis can be the impetus for change, leading eventually to a reversal of earlier trends. Central to this view is the role that social interactions play in magnifying even small initial changes in behavior.

How social norms work

Prior to 1990, teen pregnancy rates had been creeping up for two decades. Although sex education in the schools and family-planning services expanded, so did the proportion of teens having sex. And in this battle between sex and safe sex, sex won. At the same time that technology was making it easier to prevent pregnancy, social norms that had once condemned sex outside of marriage became far more permissive. Focus-group interviews with today's teenagers indicate that sex during the teen years is widely accepted. A 1997 study from Child Trends reports that boys in particular are teased or taunted if they are not sexually active while those who have multiple partners often gain in reputation. Although girls who resist sex are not ostracized, they are subject to subtle pressures from boys; often girls will have sex to secure or maintain a relationship. These pressures from peers are reinforced by the popular media, which glamorizes sex, and by adults who are ambivalent about their own values or insufficiently involved in their teenagers' lives. The result is that by the mid 1990s, a high proportion of teenagers were sexually experienced—about one-fifth by the age of 15 and three-fifths by the age of 18. At the same time, women were marrying later, creating a longer period during which nonmarital births could

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

occur. (Girls in the United States typically reach puberty at age 12 or 13 but don't marry until age 25.)

Not only were teens initiating sex earlier, but in addition, sex education and access to family-planning clinics were no panacea. Sex education is now available in over 90 percent of high schools, and most teenagers are fully informed about how pregnancies occur, but sex-education courses often are too short and come too late to do much good. In addition, the controversies and sensitivities surrounding them have prevented public school teachers from providing the kind of guidance they might give their own children at home. And although contraceptives are widely available, not just in clinics but also in stores, and teens are using them much more frequently than in the past, they do not use them consistently. The result is that failure rates are high and unplanned pregnancies all too common. Consider, for example, the 15 percent annual failure rate for those relying on condoms, the most prevalent form of contraception among teens: At this rate, more than half of sexually active individuals will become pregnant within five years and if, as we suspect, teens are especially poor users of contraceptives, the number could be far higher.

The good news of the 1990s is that sexual activity has declined at the same time that contraceptive use has continued to increase. No one knows why we have had this double dose of good news in the 1990s. But social norms seem to be shifting in a more conservative direction. For example, according to one study, the proportion of college freshmen who believe "it's all right for two people to have sex even if they've known each other for a very short time" dropped from 52 percent in 1987 to 42 percent in 1997. Similarly, an Urban Institute analysis found that two-thirds of the drop in sexual activity among adolescent males since 1988 was directly attributable to a shift in their attitudes. This shift may have been prompted by the prevalence of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases that are rampant among teens. Other factors may have included welfare reform, a strong economy, and a variety of private as well as governmental efforts to educate the public about the risks of casual sex.

And once social trends are set in motion, they have a tendency to acquire their own momentum, especially if pushed

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

along by informed opinion, the media, and peer culture. An external shock may get the ball rolling. For example, in the 1960s, the combination of more widely available welfare benefits and the movement of well-paid manufacturing jobs from urban areas in the Northeast and Midwest may have initiated an increase in childbearing outside of marriage among poor women. But once started, the practice spread to other areas and groups. Similarly, the AIDS epidemic and the 1996 welfare bill could help to reverse the process. Once a social trend starts moving in a particular direction, it creates its own energy for the simple reason that changes in behavior are contagious.

Smoking is a prime example. Those early pioneers who gave up smoking, in response to information that it was unhealthy, paid a price for not conforming to reigning social practice. But they also became models for others and eventually the balance tipped the other way. Now it is smokers, rather than nonsmokers, who face social disapproval. In short, an external shock—new information, new policies, or new technologies—interacting with the evolution of social norms in response to that shock, can produce major social changes. Some changes, like the decline in smoking, are for the better; others, such as the decline in public civility and order or the rise in births outside of marriage, are for the worse. But whether for better or for worse, changes in behavior cascade through a society, eventually influencing those little affected by the initial shock, and often doing so long after the original impetus occurred. As a result, standard social-science models have difficulty detecting such effects.

A return of Victorian values?

We could be on the cusp of a new social trend. Although the data are still fragmentary and the thesis must remain tentative, it appears that sexual attitudes are becoming more conservative and that both safer sex and delayed sex are gaining ground. Teen pregnancy and birth rates have declined for most of the decade and the out-of-wedlock birth ratio has stabilized.

Those looking for guaranteed programmatic solutions to the problems of teen pregnancy and out-of-wedlock births are likely

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be disappointed, however. The point is not that programs can't be effective, but that without a change in social norms, their impact may be small. Conversely, an intervention that begins by affecting behavior in quite modest ways may eventually produce changes in norms that snowball into bigger long-term effects. Teenagers, in particular, are enormously influenced by what their friends, parents, and heroes say and do. This suggests that programs not be judged only on the basis of their immediate effects but also on their potential to reorient peer culture. It also suggests that devoting funds to media campaigns and supporting faith-based or local community efforts that put values before services would be effective.

The subtler point is that services and values cannot be delivered in isolation from one another. Sex-education programs that teach adolescents about their bodies but not how to deal with their feelings for one another and the values that should guide such relationships are likely to fail. Similarly, "just say no" campaigns that don't engage young people in constructive activities and connect them to a supportive peer group and community are also likely to be a waste of time.

In sum, reducing births to unwed teenagers could substantially decrease child poverty, welfare dependency, and other social ills. Although little is known with certainty about how to advance this objective, states working in partnership with civic and faith-based institutions now have the opportunity to experiment with a variety of promising approaches that are critical to the longer-term success of current welfare reform efforts.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

McLuhan's world—and ours

DAVID SKINNER

"A NEW nonliterary culture exists today, of whose existence, not to mention significance, most literary intellectuals are entirely unaware," wrote Susan Sontag in her groundbreaking 1965 essay, "One Culture and the New Sensibility." The new sensibility, she argued, collapsed the distinction between highbrow and lowbrow, embraced popular culture, celebrated modernist music and painting the masses had little taste for, and advanced a new understanding of the senses. In a milieu that took as its dictate to "modify consciousness" and to "organize new modes of sensibility," Marshall McLuhan played the role of leading commentator, explaining the new world to the rest of us.

McLuhan was born in 1911 in Edmonton, the capital of Alberta, Canada. His interest in literature and a well-earned scholarship brought him to Cambridge for his graduate work where he met F.R. Leavis, studied under I.A. Richards, and became consumed with G.K. Chesterson. After Cambridge, he taught at the University of Wisconsin and St. Louis Univer-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sity, where in 1943 he completed his Ph.D. thesis on Thomas Nashe, the seventeenth-century satirist and thinker.

In many ways, McLuhan's life was a story of contradictions. A Catholic with six children, he was famous among an increasingly antireligious cultural elite that was suspicious of family life. A scholar interested in all the obscurities that had ever flowed from the pen of James Joyce, he first made a reputation outside the academy for intensely cerebral commentary on the nature of everyday language, that of newspapers and advertisements. A compulsive letter writer, and as bookish as any professor of history or English, he made a career of declaring the demise of print.

His many books include *The Mechanical Bride* in 1951, a deconstruction of advertising as both art and propaganda, and *The Gutenberg Galaxy* in 1962, an often impenetrable whirlwind of a book described by the historian E.H. Carr as "a unique and unforgettable experience." But it was McLuhan's 1964 *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (at one point the best-selling nonfiction book at Howard University) that made him a truly famous serious person. His 10 or so books, many of them co-written, and dozens of articles and essays comprise a formidable pile of literature. But the most difficult task in writing about McLuhan is explaining, aside from his off-the-cuff opinions, what he actually thought. Quoting him at any length can have the unfortunate effect of mystifying the reader. Many a McLuhan sentence will work like a koan, which once explained loses its purpose along with its edge. At the high point of his fame, McLuhan's often impenetrable style seemed to offer proof of his importance as a thinker.

Around the time of Sontag's essay, McLuhan was becoming a genuine celebrity whose name would later come up in all sorts of places. Woody Allen gave him a hilarious cameo in *Annie Hall*, in which McLuhan explained to a pretentious communications professor who had the gall to invoke the author's name in public that he, in fact, knew nothing of McLuhan's work. His name was regularly mentioned on television and in newspapers and magazines. He was a famous author and a very successful lecturer who confounded corporate seminars with riffs from his cultural dialectic (and was paid very well to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

do so). McLuhan was a forerunner of today's celebrity intellectual who can become famous, if not rich, for his scholarship. Tom Wolfe wondered if McLuhan was the "most important thinker since Newton, Darwin, Freud, Einstein and Pavlov." In the sixties, and for a good part of the seventies, McLuhan enjoyed the life of a prophet with honor.

Dubious theories

Rather fittingly, one of the best examples of McLuhan's thought comes straight from the realm of the senses, *Playboy* magazine. In a 25-page interview in the March 1969 issue, McLuhan's ideas emerge straightforward and well explained, in large part due to the interviewer's willingness to risk looking dumb for asking obvious questions. It turned out that many of McLuhan's opinions, despite his reputation for being some kind of super scholar and untimely thinker, were standard radical chic, while others were radical even by the heady standards of 1969.

McLuhan explained: Black Americans are more in touch with the ancient rhythm of tribal memory; the black power movement was good; hippies dropped out because they just couldn't relate to the rat race; TV had precipitated a showdown between the young and their print-oriented elders; the artist is a social prophet; "LSD ... gives the potential of instant and total involvement [with one's environment], both all-at-onceness and all-at-oneness"; there's no point in making marijuana or other drugs illegal; like the "Negro," the American Indian is "under tremendous social and economic pressure to ... detribalize [and] this generates great psychic pain"; the United States is balkanized by a war of identities and will eventually wither away; "political democracy as we know it is finished."

"If he is right," Tom Wolfe wrote, "it matters." Right about what, though, is not always clear. Wolfe nicely summarized McLuhan's thinking and put it in a readable context that is missing from McLuhan's own writing. Quoting McLuhan, Wolfe starts, "'Print gave tribal man an eye for an ear.'" Children, Wolfe explicated, were growing up in a new sensorial environment—one dominated by television—and had distinctly different sensorial habits, which alienated them from their print-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

oriented elders. The schools were falling apart? Well, that's because teachers were print-oriented. Young people were dropping out? Well, that's because the hustle and bustle of cities, with their lateral buildings and grid formations, just didn't seem important to the new generation.

Of course, by now the schools that are falling apart have teachers who were raised on television and the sixties dropouts now have careers and families to protect, so what they once dismissed, the rat race and all that, is now quite important to them. Even the decidedly print-generation presidential candidate Richard Nixon, whose loss to John F. Kennedy in a televised debate is often used to explain the demise of such *politicians, went on to be elected to the White House twice.* The predicted print versus TV generation showdown never came to pass. Not that this has stopped contemporary commentators, many of whom look to McLuhan for inspiration, from making the same predictions about computers and the Internet.

What McLuhan got right

And yet, McLuhan, in spite of his singular talent for bombastic overstatement, was onto something: Modern media has changed life irrevocably. Since the 1950s, it has often been said that today's children are raised on television. For many years now, that idea could be taken literally. A popular cable sitcom of the early 1990s used as its main gag TV and movie clips from the 1950s to illustrate a middle-aged character's inner life. The permanently boyish character's entire frame of reference seemed to be comprised of old westerns and screwball comedies. Returning the compliment, people who realize the role TV played in their lives have granted old shows—their theme songs, regular characters, and standby plot devices—a semi-serious mythical status. And this is just the lighter side of modern media.

Specific habits and resulting social types have been changed by television. Reading seems to have become a mere life-style choice, and the "bookworm" seems to be a thing of the past, a type that lives only in old movies: the ugly, four-eyed sister with no social skills. Describing what McLuhan discovered about the society that produced such

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

people, Wolfe wrote,

> The *visual* or *print* man is an individualist; he is 'cooler,' with built-in safeguards. He always has the feeling that no matter what anybody says, he can go check it out. The necessary information is filed away somewhere, categorized. He can *look* it up.

What was happening to people under the influence of television, McLuhan pointed out, couldn't be discovered at the library or in public records. The Dewey decimal system held few clues to the mysteries of post-print life. One had to look to oral culture for answers: The medium that Orson Welles used to scare the bejabbers out of housewives in New York and New Jersey with his reading of *The War of the Worlds* had more to teach us than all the texts in the New York Public Library.

McLuhan opened up a world of inquiry to thoughtful people. The medium may not have literally been *the* message, but it was *a* message. New media create new environments, he told everyone. He overstated the extent to which new media determine new environments, but he was pretty much right that life was being reshaped by these media.

Vietnam in many ways is an excellent example of the new environment that TV helped create. The sheer number of Baby Boomers coming of age and filling the ranks of the student movement gave antiwar protests social heft, but it was television that transmitted these same images to living rooms across the country. Similarly, the faces of American soldiers and their enemies came home via television. A Vietnam veteran once told me that the one thing he'll always remember about the war was the TV cameras. For much of the time, it was like being on a movie set, he said, with news reporters and their equipment following him and his fellow soldiers all over the country. Thus did the narrative of the war gain flesh and motion, turning it into something to react to.

Vietnam was also the drama of print man struggling in this new environment. Robert McNamara, the man who brought quantitative analysis and corporate leadership to the job of secretary of defense, was viewed as quite modern in his thinking. But the war abroad and the conflicts at home showed otherwise; this was a new kind of war because it was in a new

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

kind of environment. Indeed, as McLuhan described life then, it was tribal. The American creed meant little to the draft dodgers, the drop-outs, the various splinters of the new Left.

McLuhan should be credited with teaching us to deconstruct these communications phenomena and their social aspects. While the world was changing, he—the literary critic who had already taught the readers of serious journals and magazines how to think about media—became enough of a celebrity to be able to tell everyone that television and other technologies were changing their lives.

McLuhan's discoveries

Describing McLuhan's opus has left many commentators in a bind. This writer is not the first to resort to lists to describe what might be called McLuhan's main ideas—"ratio of senses," "the medium is the message," "global village," "media as extensions of man." Unfortunately, the more specific one gets with McLuhan's ideas, the worse he comes off. Despite this, he is and was a significant figure, though hardly a first-rate thinker.

Ratio of the senses. It was McLuhan's contention that man's nature is divisible. Like many thinkers who have wrestled with the exact parts of human nature—e.g., Plato with his division of the soul into three parts (reason, appetite, and thumos)—McLuhan argued that the key to understanding human phenomena was isolating the dominant part. According to him, in the post-Gutenberg world, man's sense of sight was dominant as a result of the new importance of literacy and the declining importance of oral media.

The obvious contrast here is with tribal cultures, wherein one's sense of self and community is established through hearing. Visually these communities make for a small world, but hearing, or rather listening, connects the present with the past and each member of the tribe with the whole tribe. Though it may seem trivial, McLuhan contended that the big loser in the sensorial shift that resulted from the printing press was the sense of smell. Oral tribal societies place less emphasis on the importance of not smelling bad, because the scent of a person is one way his presence becomes known; his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scent connected him to the tribe. One of the problems, McLuhan surmised, with the twentieth century is that people disguise their natural scent. The new global village, he ruefully reported, didn't smell like a village. All this may be true, but from here McLuhan got really carried away: He came up with an idea for a new underwear line that would actually harness body odor to bring individuals closer to each other.

The medium is the message. Probably McLuhan's most famous coinage after "global village," this one sentence did more to articulate the most original part of his thought than any other. McLuhan used a famous T.S. Eliot quotation to explain his argument. The purpose of a poem's content, Eliot wrote, is "to satisfy one habit of the reader, to keep his mind diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him: much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a nice bit of meat for the house-dog." As a description of Eliot's own poetic method, it's a useful reminder of the formalist ambitions of modernist poetry; it is not an explanation of any other kind of poetry. Yet it works for McLuhan, who took a great interest in modernist poetry, painting, and music. Like a lot of other half-radicals, he believed that artists make up a class of intellectual vanguards who see the future before the rest of us. If modern art has divided and dissolved form, it is because reality itself is no longer unified enough to give us the portraits and landscapes of earlier periods.

Somehow the artist's senses and sensibility are ready to greet the future while the rest of us have to wait for the formal announcement. Eliot's announcement about the key to modernist poetry is, for McLuhan, an announcement about the key to all media. Rather than concentrate on the rivalry between form and content, McLuhan was mainly concerned with more common categories of media: newspapers, magazines, movies, radio, television. What these media share is that none of them is crucial to survival, yet we consume their products as if they were food, clothing, and shelter.

Take newspapers. Their content is news, or as McLuhan put it, bad news. Newspapers as a general matter don't carry much else, except for advertisements. This distinction gave McLuhan one of his best quips ever: Advertisements were the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

good news in newspapers. It matters not that the makers of advertisements have something else in mind. When ads appear in newspapers, they become an antistrophe to the bad news reporters bring in. The same holds true for the news part of the newspapers: Their content is predetermined by the medium. They reflect and confirm the societies from which they spring. They can bring to their readership only what is already within the readership's experience. Thus the content of a newspaper is already decided. The medium dominates, or even is, the message.

And as a matter of experience, newspapers reduce events to visual matter that are measured in inches and column size. Newspapers hierarchize events by the placement of stories: local versus national, human interest versus business, front-page versus miscellaneous two-inch slug. The very environment of a newspaper suggests relationships between events that are imaginary. Or as McLuhan said, "A man does not read a newspaper so much as bathe in it." Newspaper reading is a ritual comfort.

This makes for the kind of discussion that usually starts with a statement like, "If a Martian were to come down and look at us humans right now, doing what we're doing, this is what he might conclude." The fictional Martian might conclude that the talking heads on the evening news have no legs and live inside the television set, or might reach any number of conclusions that have no bearing on what the great percentage of humans actually understand about what other humans and their institutions do. Only a Martian would mistake a newspaper for that which it purports to represent.

Nevertheless, the Martian conceit gives us a weirdly revealing perspective. We say someone is "in the know" because every morning he sits down with dozens of long broad sheets of paper, scans through nationwide events of the last 24 hours or so, learns the names of scores of people who are historically insignificant, and has nothing but dirty newsprint on his hands to show for it. Obviously, it is something of a ritual, a custom as opposed to a really important activity.

Global village. Modern communications technology (from the telegraph and the newspaper and the telephone to radio

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and television) has connected people. Technology connects individuals and societies. One no longer need wait for traders to pass through town to learn what's going on in other parts of the world. Information can be transmitted instantaneously. Like a village in which little that is important remains private, the lives of individuals and societies are made known to other nations by way of modern communications. Modern man and the modern nation-state are connected to other men and other nation-states like the residents of a small town. McLuhan is on to something here but then, typically, takes it too far.

At one point, for example, McLuhan proposed staging a musical about the Cold War, which he believed would generate such mutual understanding between the Soviet Union and the United States that the Cold War itself would be defused. Nor is it surprising to find out that when McLuhan was rated A-1 draft status by the U.S. government during World War II, he quickly started looking for another academic post in his native Canada. McLuhan was unconvinced that the Cold War was the result of any kind of substantive, life-or-death disagreement. However, he was capable of some interesting observations about the respective natures of capitalism and communism. For example, in *Understanding Media,* he wrote that it was possible for capitalism to simply out-perform communism in delivering material goods and thereby undermine communism's appeal. Yet even this is more a measure of his faith in technology than an indication that he understood or appreciated the economics and politics of the Cold War or the differences between communism and capitalism.

Media as extensions of man. McLuhan made this phrase the subtitle of *Understanding Media*. It is easy to overlook how radical McLuhan's thesis was, partly out of our not-unjustified habit of accepting metaphors as metaphors. McLuhan believed that metaphors, similes, puns, and other literary tricks have the power to reveal the true nature of things, rather than just expedite the writer's task of getting points and information across. One of his favorites, "ABCD-minded" (meaning absent-minded), came from James Joyce. McLuhan used it to pinpoint the obliviousness of literate print-oriented man to other media; literate man literally forgets his other senses.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The relationship of media to man's senses isn't just a matter of emphasis but of mental response and resulting social consequences. Any changes in the hierarchy of man's senses changes man himself. Industrial or visual man, who, by way of economics, is divided into rational parts, is the ultimate individualist because of the divisions he has learned from the alphabet and the printing press. Tribal or audile-tactile man is the ultimate communitarian because of the sense of oneness he has with his immediate surroundings—the result of his reliance on his hearing and sense of touch. The primary media of these different cases, print and speech respectively, literally *extend* the senses to which they correspond, eyes and ears, and the world is recreated in their image.

Technology makes the man. And if print gave tribal man an eye for an ear, electricity returned man to sensorial balance. Tribal man, in no way an individualist, enjoyed a feeling of connectedness to the rest of his world. Living in a village, physically unremoved, within shouting distance, enveloped by the scent of his people, his self was inseparable from the tribe. His senses had the capacity to contain the entirety of his social life. Whereas print, McLuhan argued, turned man into an individualist with new abstract commitments, electricity brought man back to the tribe.

Man's return to tribal, sensorial balance started with the telegraph and was completed with television—which McLuhan considered audile-tactile, and not primarily a visual technology. Movie stars, he pointed out, who took television work found that fans no longer kept their distance but suddenly treated them with great familiarity. Their voices, their bodies, their appearances, were suddenly domesticated by their presence in the TV viewers' living rooms and by the cool, low-definition technology of television itself. Television, he argued, closed the gap that print had opened up between man and the tribe. "It is the total involvement in all-inclusive nowness that occurs in young lives via TV's mosaic image." The child of TV "wants a deep commitment from society."

McLuhan's argument about the changes in man's sensorial life is literary in nature, and it is an argument only a literary critic would make. McLuhan saw life as a kind of text, or rather something outside of man to which man's mind re-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sponds and then connects with. This connection ends up altering that which man is connected to, and it changes man himself. Reality is merely perceived. There is no underlying truth, outside of those revelatory moments when man's technological inventions effect a change in perception—McLuhan believed he was living in such a moment—after which political and social change rush in. Outside of the five senses, there is nothing that really concerns McLuhan, making him the ultimate hedonist. For McLuhan, everything (and I mean everything) is but a byproduct of the meeting of technology and the senses.

And not only are media extensions of man, but man is an extension of media. On the second to last page of *Understanding Media* McLuhan wrote, "As the machine and the motorcar released the horse and projected it onto the plain of entertainment, so does automation with men." Released from the labor of pulling carriages and plows, the horse went into the circus, professional racing, and the kiddy-ride business. Automation and cybernation (or computerization), McLuhan contended, will similarly turn man into an unnecessary organism, one without any essential purpose, a circus animal the world keeps around for laughs.

Modern times

Possibly the most troubling aspect of McLuhan's ideas is how they apply to historically significant events. The following paragraph from *Understanding Media* expresses a most peculiar understanding of celebrity and demagoguery:

> It was no accident that Senator McCarthy lasted such a very short time when he switched [from radio] to TV. Soon the press decided "He isn't news anymore." Neither McCarthy nor the press knew what had happened. TV is a cool medium. It rejects hot figures and hot issues and hot people from the hot press media. Fred Allen was a casualty of TV. Was Marilyn Monroe? Had TV occurred on a large scale during Hitler's reign he would have vanished quickly. Had TV come first there would have been no Hitler at all.

One could dismiss this passage, and countless others like it, on the basis that it is no more than an early attempt to gauge the consequences of television. The only problem is that the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

passage actually means what it says: Television levels the important, the historical, and the merely entertaining, forcing them all to win and lose and live and die by the same rules—ratings, newsworthiness, the success and endurance of "image." Because Hitler was no Jack Parr, McLuhan's favorite TV personality, he would never have made it, not just in the TV business but in the world remade by television.

What exactly about television McLuhan believed would neutralize Hitler, with all other things being equal, is never clear. What is clear is that McLuhan believed only an already retribalizing people that hadn't yet reached sensorial balance could accept a hot, high-definition leader like Hitler. According to McLuhan, the Weimar Republic never had a chance; the policy of appeasement carried out by England and other nations was irrelevant; statesmanship, laws, the study of politics and history are all powerless against the ebb and flow of sensorial balance.

While political philosophers may believe education in ideas is important, McLuhan believed an education in media was necessary. He thought an understanding of media was key to any defense against its machinations. His argument may be understood as a bid for power: An education in media, obviously, would place authority in the hands of mediologists.

McLuhan's disciples

McLuhan, always the showman, established, through *Understanding Media* and other books, a reputation as the single person who could justify the ways of technology to man. His account of man's lost tribalism not only credits technology with the role of supreme and sole cause of historical change but also credits it with eventually making man superfluous. McLuhan's vague understanding of economics and naive faith in machines led him to conclude that ultimately automation and computers will do all of man's work for him. In turn, he completely undervalued humanity's resilience. For McLuhan, man is but the object of technology's mysterious powers.

McLuhan's writings and prognostications have been taken up by a new generation of writers and thinkers looking to explain the social consequences of the newest technologies. In the September 1998 issue of *Civilization*, the magazine of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Library of Congress, guest editor Jarod Lanier, a pioneer in virtual technology and a contributing editor to *Wired* magazine, wrote, "In these days of the endgame [of humanism], we see more technophobic militancy—against new abortion methods, MTV and other identity-transforming technologies—than we do militant activism against economic or political injustice." There is, in this view, nothing that can be done about partial-birth abortion, drugs, and music videos because man operates at the behest of his technologies, not the other way around.

While some have adopted McLuhan's more apocalyptic rhetoric, current trends are accomplishing a correction of sorts. In a recent issue of *Wired* magazine, "the voice of the digital revolution," one writer had the terrific idea that perhaps the good capitalist Peter Drucker had more to teach them than their "patron saint" Marshall McLuhan. All the same, the McLuhanish point that people who do not understand technology should be afraid, very afraid, gets a lot of mileage. The words McLuhan spoke resonate for many young professionals in the computer industry and their cheerleaders in the computer-industry press. Take the following snippet from McLuhan's *Playboy* interview.

> Through radio, TV, and the computer, we are already entering a global theater in which the entire world is a Happening. Our whole cultural habitat, which we once viewed as a mere container of people, is being transformed by these media and by space satellites into a living organism, itself contained within a new macrocosm or a connubium of a supraterrestrial nature. The day of the individualist, of privacy, of fragmented or "applied" knowledge, of "points of view" and specialist goals is being replaced by the over-all awareness of a mosaic world in which space and time are overcome by television, jets and computers—a simultaneous "all-at-once" world in which everything resonates with everything else as in a total electronic field, a world in which energy is generated and perceived not by the traditional connections that create linear, causative thought processes, but by the intervals, or gaps.

This is a vision of change in which the only people who play any role in their own fates are programmers, designers, and producers, where the computer- and media-illiterate are but pebbles on the side of the road to a new world. It's a self-serving vision—one that gratified McLuhan's disciples but should be resisted by the rest of us.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Budgeting more, deciding less

ERIC M. PATASHNIK

"BUDGETING is governing," declares Pete V. Domenici, chairman of the Senate Budget Committee. Few would challenge this statement. Budgeting has always been at the heart of policy making. Since the early 1980s, however, the budget has been the major issue of American politics. As Norman Ornstein observes, elected officials, businessmen, and journalists alike have been "obsessed with the budget process, endlessly analyzing and arguing over it." Though people might disagree about how well (or poorly) the budget process is working, few doubt that the budget matters more than it once did.

But while budget issues undeniably acquired a new prominence in the 1980s and 1990s because of the struggle to control the deficit, the budget-making process has in fact de-

---

A longer version of this article will appear in Durability and Change: Policymaking in the 1990s, *edited by Marc Landy, Martin Levin, and Martin Shapiro. Some passages are drawn from an essay published in the journal,* Governance.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

clined in importance as a framework for governing the economy and setting national priorities. I certainly do not want to be understood as saying that the annual budget process is unimportant. The national budget mobilizes resources and maintains the bureaucracy. Politicians continue to make budget decisions that materially affect the lives and prospects of constituents. And while the federal pork barrel is smaller than it once was, plenty of benefits remain for lawmakers to ladle out.

Still, I contend that budgeting has become a less important setting for deciding public policy—even as it has become a more significant arena for political debate. This seemingly paradoxical state of affairs is the product of dramatic changes in economic ideas, political institutions, and the composition of the federal budget itself. The budget has moved to the center of political life in the United States because budget politics is a major battleground for partisan and ideological struggles over the future of activist government. Yet while the budget involves high political stakes, the policy importance of budget-making has declined over time. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Keynesian revolution elevated the importance of the national budget because effective fiscal policy was viewed as the key to economic prosperity. But now most policy makers place their economic faith in monetary policy and the Federal Reserve. Meanwhile, the budget has become a less powerful instrument for directing spending priorities because more and more of the budget goes for entrenched long-term programs like Social Security. Politicians may be fighting over budget issues more—but they are deciding less. And as I explain below, the recent emergence of budget surpluses has not fundamentally changed these dynamics. The budget story is a case study of the contradictions of the modern American polity.

Budgeting then and now

Since the early 1980s, the budget has been the dominant issue of American national politics, overshadowing all other policy concerns. A good indicator is media coverage. According to David W. Brady and Craig Volden, the attention paid to the budget by the media has increased dramatically. During

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the 1970s, the *New York Times* ran an average of about 200 stories per year on the budget; during the 1980s, it averaged 1,800 stories a year. This trend has continued into the 1990s. When reporters cover Congress, their stories are frequently budget related.

The reason journalists emphasize budget issues today is not because they are deeply interested in the substance of public policy (though some reporters no doubt are), but because reporters instinctively love a good political fight—and the budget process is where some of the biggest recent clashes have occurred. Think of the Clinton-Gingrich budget battle of 1995. Or the squabble between House Republicans and President Bush over the abandonment of his "no new taxes" pledge at the 1990 budget summit at Andrews Air Force Base. The arcane federal budget process is now the stuff of high politics.

This is a relatively new development in American government. Traditionally, budgeting attracted little political attention. Standard accounts of federal budgeting during the 1950s and 1960s—such as the late Aaron Wildavsky's classic 1964 book *The Politics of the Budgetary Process*—described budgeting as a vital, but sedate, process of incremental bargaining between Congress and bureau chiefs. Budgeting was considered so technical and dull when the book was first published that Wildavsky felt compelled to reassure his readers on the book's first page that the topic was actually of some political interest.

Budgeting in the 1950s and 1960s lacked obvious drama for three main reasons: First, budget deficits were generally small as a percent of GDP. While programs were growing, spending was considered to be under control. Second, there was a rough ideological consensus among politicians over many taxing and spending issues. To be sure, liberals and conservatives during this era had their budget fights. But the scope of conflict over the budget was muted by the backdrop of the Cold War, the distributive nature of many spending programs—the pork barrel was still growing—and the existence of large numbers of political moderates in Congress. Finally, the rules of congressional budgeting created an artificial, yet meaningful, distinction between money decisions and policy decisions—and thus between high politics and mundane public administration.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Prior to 1974, Congress did not even consider the budget as a whole. When people spoke of the "budget," they meant the president's budget, which was then (as now) submitted to Congress each year, right after the president's State of the Union address. But the president's budget is only a set of executive proposals. Significantly, Congress did not debate these proposals as a package in the 1950s and 1960s. Rather, the president's budget proposals were taken up piecemeal by the 13 appropriations subcommittees in each chamber. Congress as a whole did not debate and vote on the total size and content of each year's budget. The effect was to cordon off funding skirmishes from broader political battles.

The new budget regime

By the 1980s, all this had changed. First, the economic and budgetary situation had worsened. Budget deficits began rising after the mid 1970s and exploded after 1981. Second, as Sarah Binder of the Brookings Institution has documented, the number of political moderates on Capitol Hill declined. The Democratic congressional caucus became more liberal, the Republican conference more conservative. Finally, the rules of federal budgeting were transformed. Provoked by President Nixon's blatant abuse of his impoundment authority, and by concern about increasing budget deficits, Congress adopted a landmark reform, the Budget Act of 1974. The measure curbed impoundments, created the Congressional Budget Office, and established new budget committees in each chamber. The House and Senate budget committees were given the job of formulating overall budget packages ("budget resolutions") for lawmakers to debate and decide upon.

These three factors—rising budget deficits, the disappearance of the political center, and congressional budget reform—combined to create a wholly new and different budget regime. Because the deficit was large, lawmakers faced tough budget choices. Because Republicans and Democrats were more ideologically distant from one another, partisan conflict over budget matters increased. And because Congress now had to vote on total spending, taxing, and deficit levels—which is to say, on the total direction of national public policy—the conflicts between the parties took on heightened meaning, especially

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

because top party leaders like the Speaker came to play an active role in appointing members of the key budget committees and crafting omnibus budget legislation.

The budget deficit was not just another policy issue during the 1980s and the 1990s. It was the master issue, subsuming all the others. Policy experts began speaking of "the fiscalization of the policy debate." By this phrase, they meant the new tendency for politicians and policy makers to debate programs not according to their particular merits but according to their impact on the government's overall fiscal condition. "The measure of all arguments became dollars," observes former Congressional Budget Office (CBO) director Robert D. Reischauer. The key question became: "What would the policy do to the deficit?" The obsession with the budget deficit transformed the political debate. As Paul Pierson of Harvard argues, the preoccupation with budget constraints displaced pragmatic disagreements over operational details with "broader, more abstract arguments about the appropriate role of government."

There is nothing inherent in budget deficits that must produce ideological and partisan conflict. Given the context of American national politics in the 1980s and the 1990s, however, fundamental disagreement over the budget was virtually guaranteed. The underlying policy differences between the two parties were large. Moreover, the new budget process forced these differences out into the open. Some 40 percent of congressional roll calls on budget resolutions between 1976 and 1990 found 75 percent or more of Republicans opposing 75 percent or more of Democrats. On 10 percent of the roll calls, 90 percent or more of one party opposed 90 percent or more of the other. Even though the gap between Democrats and Republicans was hard to bridge, party leaders pushed their agendas in the context of the budget process because budget measures enjoyed special procedural advantages not available to other legislation. Thus Republicans in 1995 tried to use the budget process not only to lower deficits but to cut taxes, kill programs, reform welfare, restructure Medicare and Medicaid, and send power back to the states. Of course, many of these proposals failed. The important point is that the budget process became the leading legislative game in town.

Under the rules of the game, every measure must conform

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to budget enforcement provisions. The leading keeper of the rules is the CBO. Because the CBO's scorekeeping decisions can have a decisive impact on policy outcomes, politicians complain vigorously when rulings don't go their way—as in House Republicans' ongoing complaint that the CBO fails to recognize the "dynamic" impact of tax cuts in its statistical models. As political sociologist Theda Skocpol notes, during the Progressive era and the New Deal, drafters of legislation spent a lot of time trying to guess what the Supreme Court would accept as constitutional. Today, lawmakers live in fear that the CBO will "reject their proposals as not 'costed out.'"

Keynesianism's rise and fall

In sum, everything is now a budget issue and the congressional budget process has become more centralized, complex, and politically adversarial. Meanwhile, the power of professional budget forecasters has greatly increased. What makes these developments all the more interesting is that they have occurred during an era when the annual budget process has been of declining importance. The budget can be used to steer the economy and direct government priorities—two functions that it performs to a much lesser extent than it once did.

With the triumph of Keynesian economics—or at least the applied version of it—in the 1950s and 1960s, the budget became the supposed key to governing the American economy. Before World War II, policy makers' lack of scientific knowledge about how the economy worked prevented them from using the budget to promote economic growth with low inflation. Politicians were also constrained by the belief that the budget must be balanced every year. As James Savage of the University of Virginia has shown, since the nation's founding, a balanced federal budget has carried a symbolic importance far beyond its objective economic meaning, signaling democratic control, social harmony, and the preservation of republican government. By contrast, budget deficits have stood for inefficiency and corruption. Even Franklin D. Roosevelt, whose New Deal programs resulted in a string of massive peacetime deficits, never really abandoned the view that government, except in times of crisis, had a moral obligation to balance its books.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

By the late 1950s, however, leading economists increasingly saw the balanced-budget dogma as the main obstacle to rational economic policy making. With the triumph of Keynesian doctrine in the early 1960s, that obstacle was temporarily removed. President Kennedy's economic advisers believed in fiscal activism—that is, in deliberately pursuing the precise level of aggregate taxing and spending most appropriate given the current state of the economy. If economic conditions were disappointing, fiscal adjustments should be made. Budget deficits were no longer considered evil in themselves; what mattered was their impact on aggregate output and consumer demand. "The federal budget can help achieve the overall economic goals of a high level of employment and reasonable price stability," confidently asserted two Brookings economists in 1971. "To serve this purpose, the amount of stimulus or restraint coming from the budget must be responsive to the needs of the economy at any particular time." Although monetary policy was not entirely discounted, most Keynesians during this era believed that fiscal policy would be more effective.

The national budget thus came to be seen as the key to economic prosperity. Keynesianism's greatest triumph came with the large tax cut enacted by Congress in 1964. Whether the Kennedy-Johnson tax cut actually achieved its stated goal of spurring economic growth remains a matter of dispute among professional economists. But clearly elected officials believed that it had worked. To deny the essential correctness of Keynesian prescriptions was to declare oneself a know-nothing.

The triumph of folk wisdom

The Keynesian intellectual revolution did not convert everyone, however. Public-opinion surveys indicate that ordinary Americans never really abandoned the traditional belief that budget deficits are intrinsically decadent and immoral. What James Q. Wilson calls the "elite abandonment" of fiscal orthodoxy in the 1960s thus opened a normative gap between leaders and average citizens on budget politics.

But in the United States the values of ordinary citizens are not easily brushed aside. Many Keynesian experts took the posi-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tion that budget balancing was no more than an accounting fetish. Yet few politicians were willing to tell the public it was foolish. Keynesian presidential advisers therefore developed a hybrid concept, the "full employment" budget. Instead of strict balance, the idea was that the government would adopt fiscal policies that would cause the budget to be in balance at full employment. The Kennedy-Johnson tax cut was explicitly sold to the public on these grounds. According to the late Herbert Stein, "Keynesian economists were willing to make use of the vulgar prejudice in favor of a balanced budget, even if they did not share it."

The power of Keynesian thought was substantially tied to its standing among professional economists. But economic theories can be discredited if the world doesn't work as predicted. When the economy experienced "stagflation" in the mid 1970s, Keynesians were bewildered and lost confidence. The dominant economic goal shifted from stimulating consumer demand to controlling inflation and boosting productivity. Economists continued to accept the idea of protecting family income through the use of "automatic stabilizers" such as food stamps and unemployment insurance. But they increasingly argued that politicians were incapable of "fine tuning" fiscal policy to the business cycle. Primary responsibility for the nation's economic performance, they said, was better left to unelected experts at the Federal Reserve.

As the decade of the 1970s came to a close, the idea of a "full employment" budget was heard less and less. In the 1984 presidential campaign, every major Democratic candidate condemned deficit spending. Over the remainder of the decade, the balanced-budget idea became increasingly powerful, and politicians increasingly catered to the traditional fiscal orthodoxy of average citizens. As columnist Robert Samuelson observes, the recovery of the balanced-budget concept can be seen as a "reassertion of folk wisdom over professional economics."[1]

---

[1] To be sure, Reagan's supply-side advisers—very much like the Keynesians before them—renewed the familiar argument that a balanced budget is of little intrinsic economic importance. But the brief supply-side episode hardly revised fiscal activism. Supply siders were not interested in using the budget to govern the economy: They wanted to get the government out of the way. What really mattered, they argued, were the incentives for individuals and corporations to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Budget meltdown

By the mid 1980s, very few politicians or mainstream economists believed anymore in using the budget to manage the economy. We were all monetarists now. This was enormously frustrating to those few remaining activist liberals in the executive branch who felt that the government should use spending increases to boost economic performance. "In case you hadn't noticed, America's domestic policy is now being run by Alan Greenspan and the Federal Reserve Board," lamented former Labor Secretary Robert Reich. "Their decisions about interest rates are determining how many of us have jobs and how many of us get a raise. Congress is out of this loop." President Clinton did emphasize the need for government "investment" early in his first term. But the administration proposed only a very modest economic stimulus plan, which Congress ultimately scaled back under deficit pressures and the new economic consensus.

As the Federal Reserve was acting with dispatch to control inflation in the 1980s and 1990s, the congressional budget process was coming apart at the seams. Politicians talked endlessly about the urgency of getting the nation's fiscal house in order. Yet appropriations bills were constantly late. Between 1981 and 1985, the federal government shut down six times. Three more government shutdowns occurred between 1986 and 1990, and two more during the historic budget battles of 1995–96. These funding interruptions were not inconsequential. "Nonessential" federal workers were furloughed. Tourists hoping to see the pandas found the National Zoo closed. Americans planning to travel abroad were temporarily unable to obtain passports. But the most sensitive parts of the budget—the massive income transfer programs—were largely unaffected. For most Americans, the functioning of the federal budget process—the topic of endless news coverage—simply wasn't that relevant.

Of course, even as the federal budget became less central to economic management, budgeting could still have remained a vital process for setting national spending priorities. Cer-

---

save, produce, and invest. Private entrepreneurship, not public budgeting, was their watchword.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tainly, it is difficult to imagine a time when budgeting will not matter for resource allocation. Policy makers will always confront questions about how to divvy up scarce taxpayer dollars. Nonetheless, the scope for priority-setting in the U.S. budget has long been narrower than many believe. As Wildavsky explained in 1964, the budget is never actively reviewed as a whole every year. To save energy and time, politicians generally accept the prior year's budget as the starting point for the current one, confining their attention to changes at the margins. But—and this point is crucial—there is even less room for shaping government priorities through the budget today than there was in the 1950s and 1960s. There are two main reasons for this. First, the federal government's era of program building is all but over. Second, a greater share of spending goes for long-term commitments like Social Security.

It is easy to forget just how much program building took place over the post-war period. Reischauer provides a useful reminder:

> In the mid-1950s, numerous government agencies did not exist. A partial list includes the Departments of Transportation, Education, Energy, and Housing and Urban Development and agencies such as NASA, EPA, the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and the Legal Services Corporation.

Such program building gave Congress the opportunity to make important funding decisions during the 1950s, 1960s, and early 1970s.

By the 1980s, however, the federal government was involved in numerous policy sectors, programs were mature, and many spending items were deeply entrenched. The very permanence of big government further narrowed the scope for active decision making and increased the overall stability of budget results. According to an important recent study in the *American Journal of Political Science*, year-to-year changes in domestic spending priorities were actually more volatile during the post-war decades than during the 1980s and early 1990s, even though the modern budget process is so much more rancorous and conflictual.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The expansion of long-term commitments

The increased stability of budget outcomes is not merely the product of the maturation of big government. It also reflects an erosion of budgetary flexibility. Since the 1950s, annual appropriations paid out of general tax revenues—the accounts over which politicians possess the most discretion—have declined from more than two-thirds to less than one-third of the budget. This development reflects the growth of entitlement spending (mainly for Social Security and Medicare), the expansion of trust funds dedicated to specific purposes, and the adoption of automatic cost-of-living adjustments for social benefits and the tax code. More and more of the budget is on automatic pilot. As Eugene Steuerle argues, "Never before in our history has the law pre-ordained so much of our future spending patterns. Never before have dead and retired policy makers so dominated officials elected today."

Because so much of future budgets is already spoken for, the CBO is further encouraged to make long-term budget forecasts. Yet, because future budgets are so sensitive to changes in economic conditions, these forecasts often turn out to be quite wrong. For example, no one foresaw the disappearance of the budget deficit in 1998. One effect of our long-term public commitments has thus been simultaneously to reduce uncertainty for program beneficiaries and increase uncertainty for budget projections.

Entitlements, in particular, have stabilized budget outcomes but destabilized the budget process. In the 1950s and early 1960s—before the big increase in entitlement spending—the budget process was relatively insulated. Budget officials had cordial relations with one another and seemingly bargained in good faith. Interest groups could testify at appropriations hearings and seek to influence key legislators and bureaucrats. They could form coalitions. But clientele groups—and the media—were generally shut out from the meetings where the crucial deals were made. As Wildavsky wrote of budgeting during this era, "Secrecy is maintained."

The implicit rationale for this closed-door policy was that the U.S. budget was fundamentally the government's business—not the public's. Most federal spending during this era financed goods and services, especially defense. But most en-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

titlements are income transfers. The expansion of entitlement commitments thus made ordinary Americans increasingly dependent on the government for their personal well-being. As budget expert Allen Schick notes, entitlements gave a host of clientele groups—the elderly, coal miners, and others—a direct, "open-ended draw on the Treasury." These budget claimants "brought demands, rights, and intense conflict to what once had been a sedate process." In the era of entitlements, a closed, secretive budget process could no longer be sustained.

Struggle and consensus

The budget deficit grew between the mid 1970s and mid 1990s chiefly because spending on long-term entitlement programs outpaced economic growth. To be sure, the Reagan administration in 1981 won the enactment of a major budget package featuring a significant tax cut, reduction in domestic discretionary spending, and defense buildup. After the mid 1980s, however, the impact of current political decisions on budget outcomes was relatively modest.

Virtually every influential politician, Democrats and Republicans alike, agreed on the need for courageous action on the budget after 1981. Yet for all the political emphasis on deficit reduction, the actual level of legislative progress made in easing the deficit was comparatively modest. In 1985, Congress enacted the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings legislation, which required a balanced budget in six years. But when the Gramm-Rudman deficit-reduction targets started to bite, they were postponed and then essentially scrapped. A number of beneficiaries (especially Medicare providers, upper-income taxpayers, and the defense sector) suffered genuine losses, and deficit-reduction bills during the 1980s and 1990s definitely caused some pain. Yet strong political support for the federal government's long-term spending promises severely circumscribed the range of feasible cutbacks.

Efforts to make deep reductions in the deficit were also thwarted by ideological conflict in Congress. Both liberals and conservatives developed coherent deficit reduction plans. But neither had the votes to go it alone, making compromise necessary. Despite the resort to bipartisan summits over the 1980s and 1990s, conflict, stalemate, and delay were the rule. Dur-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing the intense, highly partisan battle over the 1996 budget, 13 separate stopgap measures had to be enacted.

In sum, the deficit wars did not make budget outcomes nearly as volatile as one might expect. While budget reforms like Gramm-Rudman and the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990 probably did help restrain spending on existing programs to some extent, their most important effect was to discourage Congress from creating expensive new budget promises. This implied that deficits would eventually recede as economic growth caught up with the rate of entitlement growth. And that is basically what occurred. The legislative changes made in the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 were not expected to bring about a balanced budget until 2002. Congress achieved a balanced budget in 1998, four years ahead of schedule, primarily because medical inflation slowed and economic performance greatly surpassed expectations.

Future prospects

In sum, during the 1980s and 1990s, the budget became a major issue in American politics. At the same time, the use of the budget as a framework for governing the economy came to an end and spending priorities became increasingly entrenched.

This is ironic to say the least. Before 1974, Congress had no organizational capacity to effect fiscal policy even though Keynesianism was the dominant economic theory. After the establishment of a top-down congressional budget process in 1974, legislators had the budgetary tools for economic management. By then, however, the idea of using the budget to drive the economy had lost legitimacy.

An even deeper irony is the gap between the tremendous attention paid to current budget battles and the narrow maneuvering room of the contestants. The most important decisions affecting today's allocation of budget resources were made by politicians no longer in office. When settled long-term commitments crowd out the freedom to choose, the budget comes to reflect policy priorities more than set them.

It remains to be seen whether mounting budget surpluses will influence political struggles between the two parties. To be sure, the surpluses create some new policy options. But it

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

seems unlikely that they will usher in a new era of political consensus. As of this writing, the prospects of a major budget deal this year appear dim. Even if an eleventh-hour tax and spending package is cobbled together, it won't fundamentally change the political economy of the budget. In the first place, the budget surpluses are temporary. Large deficits will re-emerge early in the next century, once the Baby Boomers begin to retire. About two-thirds of the total budget surpluses forecast over the next decade reflect surpluses generated by Social Security—a situation that creates nasty dilemmas for both parties. The remaining one-third of the projected surpluses assumes large reductions in discretionary domestic spending. Congress has shown little stomach for such cuts in the past. Finally, a growing share of the budget will go for retirement and health programs for the elderly. The creation of a new Medicare prescription drug benefit would only reinforce existing spending trends.

If and when the policy significance of budgeting increases, it will be because of one of the following three things: Politicians embrace new economic theories that emphasize the advantages and feasibility of fiscal activism; political support for the government's long-term commitments, especially the major entitlements, seriously erodes; or strong demands emerge for major new federal programs or sweeping tax cuts. At the moment, all three possibilities seem remote. As a result, elected officials in the years and decades ahead are likely to continue to budget more and decide less.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The bad law of "disparate impact"

ROGER CLEGG

THE "disparate impact" theory of discrimination is curious, ubiquitous, and mischievous. The theory holds that when an action has a disproportionate *effect* on some group (racial, ethnic, gender, whatever), it can be challenged as illegal discrimination—even if there was no discriminatory *intent*. This is quite different from a "disparate treatment" lawsuit, where the plaintiff must prove that the defendant treated him worse because of a particular characteristic.

The perniciousness of disparate impact was recently on display in two high-profile cases. The Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in the U.S. Department of Education, headed by civil-rights activist Norma Cantu, relied on the approach in its "draft guidelines" circulated to various college officials (and others). The guidelines put colleges on notice that relying on standardized tests, like the SAT and ACT, on which some classes of persons do worse than others, can place them in legal jeopardy under OCR's interpretation of the civil-rights laws.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In another example, federal judge Ronald L. Buckwalter ruled earlier this year that the National Collegiate Athletic Association's "Proposition 16" had an illegal disparate effect on African Americans. Proposition 16, along with its predecessor Proposition 48, was designed to ensure that students accepted into college athletic programs had some likelihood of eventually graduating. By requiring that any student have achieved some minimal combination of high-school grades and standardized test scores, the NCAA hoped to raise student-athlete graduation rates and end horror stories of collegiate exploitation of young athletes.

Cantu does not assert that the SAT and ACT judge students of different races according to different standards, and Buckwalter did not rule that Proposition 16 by its terms treated blacks differently from whites. Nor did Cantu suggest that those designing standardized tests are deliberately discriminating against certain races or ethnicities, and Buckwalter did not find that the NCAA intended to discriminate against blacks. Nonetheless, because blacks and, to a lesser extent, Hispanics perform below whites and Asians on the ACT and SAT, colleges that rely too heavily on these tests can be accused of civil-rights violations. And because a disproportionate number of black students were disqualified from athletic participation by Proposition 16, Judge Buckwalter ruled that it was illegal discrimination. But if some selection criterion has neither discriminatory terms nor discriminatory intent, then in what sense is it discrimination because of race?

Recent explosion

The disparate-impact idea is not found in the original Civil Rights Act of 1964; indeed, it is clear from the act's text and history that this approach was not what Congress had in mind. But it was adopted by the courts at the behest of federal bureaucrats and the civil-rights establishment. The Supreme Court itself ratified the approach in 1971, in an employment case challenging a high-school diploma requirement and the use of off-the-shelf aptitude tests by a North Carolina utility. Twenty years later, Congress belatedly codified the approach for employment law.

Ironically, the popularity of disparate-impact lawsuits in the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

employment area, where the concept began, has actually declined since 1991, when highly lucrative compensatory and punitive damages were made available if intentional discrimination was shown. But outside the workplace, disparate-impact claims are exploding (and their popularity may soon return in the employment area if a decision last summer by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit, making it extremely easy to win disparate-impact lawsuits, is followed).

This new growth first became apparent in housing-discrimination lawsuits. During the Reagan and Bush administrations, the Justice Department had opposed expansion of disparate-impact doctrine to the housing area. The Clinton administration, however, has aggressively pursued these claims, as political scientist Robert Detlefsen has documented. An internal memorandum dated December 17, 1993, written by HUD Assistant Secretary Roberta Achtenberg, and addressed to "all regional directors" of the agency's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, instructed that Fair Housing Act cases should now be analyzed using disparate impact. It further stated that if a housing practice had a disproportionate effect, it could be justified only "by a business necessity which is sufficiently compelling to overcome the discriminatory effect," and that such defenses were to be viewed skeptically. Thus, for example, a landlord who decided that he would not rent to drug addicts could be sued if it turned out that, in his community, this had a disparate impact on racial minorities. He would be liable unless he could prove to HUD's or a federal judge's satisfaction that this practice was a "necessity."

The administration has extended the disparate-impact theory not only to the actual providers of housing but also to housing lenders and insurers. Banks and insurance companies that turn down a "disproportionate" number of some racial or ethnic group are being sued. In the wake of one such lawsuit by the administration, Nationwide Insurance Company, one of the largest property and casualty insurers, agreed it would no longer make underwriting decisions on the basis of such objective factors as the age or market value of a home. The administration claimed that these policies had an illegally discriminatory effect on minorities. Allstate and State Farm have also caved in to this pressure.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But it is Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that has really caught the creative fancy of the civil-rights bar in the last few years. Title VI prohibits racial or ethnic discrimination in any program or activity that receives federal financial assistance. The Supreme Court has held that the statute itself prohibits only intentional discrimination, but unfortunately, the federal bureaucracy's regulations frequently ban actions with a disparate impact as well.

Here, too, the Clinton administration has been eager to push the disparate-impact approach. On July 14, 1994, Attorney General Janet Reno sent a memorandum to all "heads of departments and agencies that provide federal financial assistance," instructing them to "ensure that the disparate impact provisions in your regulations are fully utilized." Where federally funded programs have disproportionate effects, "those policies and practices must be eliminated unless they are shown to be necessary to the program's operation and there is no less discriminatory alternative."

OCR's draft guidelines and Judge Buckwalter's decision are only two of the more recent examples of disparate-impact actions brought under Title VI. Last year, another federal judge struck down Alabama's refusal to administer driver's license tests in a language other than English as illegal discrimination on the basis of national origin. The Clinton administration is supporting the challenge on appeal, which was argued in Atlanta last March.

Earlier in the year, the ACLU and other civil-rights groups challenged Berkeley's alleged overreliance on SAT scores and AP courses on the grounds that such criteria illegally discriminate against blacks, Hispanics, and Filipinos. The Clinton administration had already said it will investigate a similar complaint leveled by civil-rights groups concerned that California's decision to end preferences will have, obviously, a disparate effect on certain minorities. The argument that ending a system of deliberate discrimination—as California did by passing Proposition 209—might somehow violate the civil-rights laws because of its disparate impact on certain groups is breathtaking, but it spotlights where the logic of the disparate-impact approach leads.

In another matter involving the application of disparate-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impact law to education, the NCAA recently decided not to recommend that college basketball players be made ineligible for competition during all or part of their freshman season. The stated goal had been to give freshmen a chance to adjust both academically and socially to college, but the proposal was rejected, at least in part, by a fear that such an action would prompt another disparate-impact lawsuit, since college basketball players are disproportionately black. "We're not going to do anything stupid legally," said one member of the NCAA committee that had been studying the issue.

Even pollution has been challenged as illegally discriminatory. Environmental groups recently challenged a market-oriented pollution-control initiative allowing oil companies to forego cleaning up emissions from certain facilities in exchange for buying older, high-polluting vehicles and taking them off the highways. The initiative was said to have the effect of subjecting certain minority neighborhoods to disproportionately high levels of pollution.

The Clinton administration also has weighed in on behalf of "environmental justice." Bill Lann Lee, the acting head of the Justice Department's civil-rights division, is among the environmental justice pioneers. When he headed the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund's Los Angeles office, for instance, he challenged the extension of the Long Beach Freeway by 4.5 miles on the grounds that it would have a discriminatory environmental effect on Latino neighborhoods.

But the predictable effect of environmental justice has been to block economic development in minority areas. Worse, as Brookings Institution senior fellow Christopher H. Foreman, Jr. has argued, it has distracted minority communities from the real health threats they face, like substance abuse and poor diets. One can acknowledge that poor communities often face environmental problems without believing that racial discrimination is the cause or civil-rights litigation the answer.

The case of voting

In 1980, a plurality of the Supreme Court held that the Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibited only intentional discrimination. But civil-rights advocates succeeded in persuad-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing Congress to amend the act in 1982, so that voting practices with discriminatory "results" were also barred.

The principal—and hoped for—outcome was preserving the ability of these advocates to demand that districts be drawn in such a way as to ensure a proportionate number of black and Hispanic officeholders for various jurisdictions. The Justice Department's civil-rights division has long insisted on this sort of racial gerrymandering, and the problem has gotten worse as redistricting computer-software has become more sophisticated. "These are Jim Crow districts," Abigail Thernstrom has written, "designed as 'homelands' for black voters."

The degree to which Congress intended this result is open to question, and the Supreme Court has since 1993 put limits on racial gerrymandering. Nonetheless, it cannot be doubted that the "results" language in the Voting Rights Act has, like the disparate-impact approach elsewhere, driven race-consciousness—particularly in reapportionment.

The creation of "safe seats" for minority representatives is, in turn, likely to discourage interracial coalition building, reduce electoral competition and political participation, and encourage identity politics and bloc voting. The disparate-impact approach under the Voting Rights Act has also been used to challenge anticorruption measures, and, most recently, to encourage even state and local judges to view themselves as beholden to particular racial constituencies.

Why it survives and thrives

In *Reaching Beyond Race*, Paul M. Sniderman and Edward G. Carmines conducted a polling experiment to assess support for affirmative action where its justification is responding to disparate impact. They found that this justification "has no persuasive power among whites ... [who] were no more likely, if the justification for affirmative action was described in terms of [correcting] disparate impact, to support it than they were when presented with no justification whatever." Thus "almost 80 percent opposed racial quotas despite the disparate impact of a company's hiring policies." On what ground then is the disparate-impact approach justified, and why has it not only survived but thrived?

The short answer is that anyone who attacks disparate-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

impact lawsuits is sure to be accused of wanting to "turn back the clock" on civil rights. When the Supreme Court tried to clarify—certainly not end—disparate-impact law in 1989, NAACP leader Benjamin Hooks likened the justices to Klansmen. But demagogy aside, what are the underlying arguments to be made for these lawsuits?

Those defending the disparate-impact approach make several closely related arguments. First, they argue that because racism is so prevalent, and because, at the same time, it is so skillfully hidden, plaintiffs should not be required to produce a smoking gun of discriminatory intent. Next, they argue that no unintended social costs are incurred when selection devices with disparate impacts must be defended or are eliminated. Finally, they hold that because integration is a vital goal, any device—no matter how innocent and innocently contrived—that stands in the way should be scrapped.

Part of the answer to the first argument is empirical: "Institutional racism" is in fact rare, and where racism does exist, it is usually not particularly well hidden. Of course, it is hard to persuade people who disagree on this point. But one should also keep in mind that no smoking gun is necessary to prove discriminatory intent. The Supreme Court has made clear that, as with any other offense, mere circumstantial evidence of discrimination is sufficient to win a case.

Nor is it true that there's no cost in requiring defendants to get rid of selection devices with disparate impacts that they cannot justify in court. In the first place, the defendant is not just told to get rid of the offending device: He must also pay his lawyers, the other side's lawyers, and the plaintiffs' back wages, besides hiring or promoting someone he thinks will not be the most productive person for the job. Worse, there are the inevitable economic costs when bureaucrats, judges, and plaintiffs' lawyers determine—through litigation or the threat of litigation—the selection devices that ought to be used. Finally, it is simply not the case that only bad selection devices will be shied away from. Being confident in the device does not necessarily mean that you are willing to "bet the company" in an uncertain lawsuit that will be decided by a judge or jury who knows much less about a business than you do.

It is the third argument that one suspects is really behind

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the adamant defense of the disparate-impact approach. Perhaps there will be economic costs when perfectly good selection devices are eliminated, but, say the advocates of disparate impact, the social benefits justify them. There is in this the usual leftist impatience with anyone's fear of losing money, even though lost money means lost jobs. But let's concentrate instead on the noneconomic costs. Advocates are no longer making an argument against discrimination but an argument in its favor. They do not maintain that the disparate-impact approach will end deliberate discrimination against some groups; rather, they acknowledge that it will increase discrimination against others. Let there be no mistake: The institutionalization of discrimination is a serious social cost. Integration achieved at the price of white resentment, minority stigmatization, and the legalization of racialist thinking is not worth it.

The intent of disparate impact

Disparate-impact theory has always been without merit. A civil-rights suit ought to focus on whether people of different races are treated differently *because* of their race. That is the common-sense meaning of "discrimination," and that is what the 1964 act clearly said and meant. The question of intent, rather than incidental effect, ought to be at the heart of every lawsuit.

Defendants in disparate-impact suits do have the opportunity to rebut the plaintiffs' case by proving that their challenged policies are justified by some "necessity." But it is risky to go to court, trying to prove to a judge or jury—who will know nothing about one's enterprise—that the challenged practice is a "necessity." The technical "validation" frequently insisted on by civil-rights plaintiffs, enforcement bureaucrats, and federal judges is often impossible to demonstrate. And, conversely, it is almost always possible that a plaintiff in some group can come up with somewhat different criteria that will diminish the impact on that group while still serving the defendant's end, even if not as well.

And so—surprise—many defendants will simply ensure that the disparate impact does not occur in the first place, taking steps to guarantee that the numbers come out right. Indeed,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

once the Supreme Court recognized the disparate-impact cause of action, the federal government and the private sector argued that it must also allow reverse discrimination so that employers could comply with the law, and the Court so ruled in 1979. William Coleman, a principal author of the disparate-impact legislation that President Bush vetoed, and later, in more palatable form, signed, was candid in a White House meeting about what he wanted: "What I need is a generation of proportional hiring, and then we can relax these provisions."

Thus potential defendants and bureaucrats have adopted surreptitious quotas, dual standards, and preferential treatment. Or society can simply lower its standards across the board, which is the immediate result of the NCAA ruling and seems to be the object of OCR's intimidating "draft guidelines." Either approach is just fine with the civil-rights lobby. By pushing companies and others to substitute quota-driven decisions for merit-based, colorblind ones, disparate-impact lawsuits have two bad results: less efficient and productive policies and the institutionalization of race-consciousness. And that is not just the effect of disparate impact. That is its intent.

In many cases, the use of the disparate-impact approach will result in a federal agency dictating the selection device. OCR's guidelines, for instance, point a litigation revolver at a college's head. Any college will want to choose students in a way that will not be challenged by the deep-pocketed grantors and litigators from the federal government. Only they can determine what selection device will meet their approval, and they will be quite happy to share their advice.

But what is really rotten at the core of disparate-impact theory is this: Under the guise of combating the oxymoronic problem of "unintended discrimination," the theory requires deliberate discrimination. It requires selection devices that incorporate racial, ethnic, and gender goals or quotas. Such a practice would be condemned as discriminatory under any other circumstances. If a bigoted Los Angeles employer determined that he had been hiring "too many" Asians and Jews by giving a particular test, and therefore deliberately discarded the test for one that he knows will result in fewer of them being

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hired, all would agree that this violates the law. And yet, it is precisely this kind of calculation that disparate-impact theory applauds.

The unintended effect of disparate impact

The use of quotas and the lowering of standards are unlikely to offend the civil-rights establishment. But there are other consequences of the disparate-impact approach that might give its supporters some pause.

If it is true, for instance, that Hispanics fail in disproportionate numbers to finish high school, then it makes more sense to address this problem directly than to sweep it under the rug by requiring employers to hire underqualified and unprepared Hispanic workers. Theoretically, of course, it might be possible to solve the underlying problem while prohibiting practices with a disparate impact, but, as a practical matter, the latter goal will undermine the former.

A number of educational reforms in California were precipitated when, but only when, the ballot initiative there prohibited the state's use of preferences based on race, ethnicity, and sex. Similarly, C. Boyden Gray, who led the Bush administration's opposition to those seeking to expand the disparate-impact approach, has argued that its position was motivated principally by a desire to ensure that educational performance and accountability improved. If the private sector cannot demand high-school diplomas and good grades, they are less likely to be earned.

It does minority schoolchildren no service to challenge their schools' use of standardized tests—tests that improve instruction and accountability. Even more questionable is a disparate-impact lawsuit in Alabama, which since 1985 has blocked the state from testing prospective teachers. Or consider a much different problem: The fact that crack cocaine penalties disproportionately affect blacks is cited as proof of discrimination. But easing these sentences will not improve the quality of life in many predominately African-American communities.

The winners and losers in a disparate-impact lawsuit are not always predictable. In the hiring of policemen and firefighters, for example, there will frequently be both a physical-fitness and a paper-and-pencil test, and it is also frequently

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the case that the former will have a disparate impact on women. If a lawsuit successfully challenges a physical-fitness test, then the paper-and-pencil test is likely to be weighed more heavily. Unfortunately, however, this is likely to have a disparate impact on Hispanics and blacks. Of course, had they sued first, they might have succeeded in forcing the employer to place more emphasis on the physical-fitness test—to the disadvantage of women. The point is that just about any selection device is likely to have a disparate impact on some group, whether because of race, sex, ethnicity, religion, age, or disability—any of which could be asserted as the basis of a federal lawsuit. And that lawsuit is unlikely to be in the interests of every historically aggrieved group.

The disparate-impact approach also encourages the already widespread tendency, on the Right and Left, to view every social problem through a racial lens. If a disproportion exists, then it must be caused by race, says the Right, or racism, says the Left. But racism is not the problem, on the one hand, nor is there "something in the blood" that predisposes some groups toward antisocial behavior or underachievement. True, there are cultural causes of social pathologies, but race does not equal culture any more than it equals criminality. Most blacks are law-abiding, for instance, and the life styles of many whites reflect a nationwide cultural and moral decline.

The mindset that sees the world in minority-versus-white terms is bad for race relations generally, of course, but the biggest losers are minorities. When standards must be lowered and quotas imposed because of "them," resentment and stereotypes flourish, and progress toward genuine racial equality comes to a halt.

Getting it right

It is likely that, without legislative intervention, disparate-impact theory will continue to flourish in the bureaucracies and the courts. The good news is that, with respect to everything except employment and voting, the politically difficult task of amending or repealing a civil-rights statute is unnecessary. The current statutes do not require a disparate-impact approach for education, housing, or environmental protections; accordingly, the federal bureaucracy should not either. But

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

since it does, Congress should step in: It should establish that, unless a federal antidiscrimination law expressly provides for a disparate-impact cause of action, then the law proscribes only disparate treatment, not disparate results.

For employment, existing statutes do codify disparate-impact causes of action. In a perfect world, Congress would rewrite these statutes to exclude disparate-impact claims. At a minimum, it should add a defense for employers whose neutral selection criteria are challenged: If the employer can prove that the criteria were not motivated by a desire to discriminate, then he should win.

This is not as good as ending disparate-impact employment claims completely, but it does give employers the chance to deal with them as disparate-treatment claims. And even the politically timid might be willing to support a statute that says: an employer cannot be held liable for discrimination against someone because of, say, race, if he proves that he did not treat that person differently because of race. For voting, too, the statute must be narrowed to prohibit actual discrimination only. It must be rewritten so that no one can use it to encourage racial politics and racial gerrymandering.

Most of the worst abuses of civil-rights laws can be traced to the disparate-impact doctrine. Removing that doctrine from the law will help return the civil-rights statutes to their original purpose of barring, rather than encouraging, race-based thinking and policies.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

To the "disadvantaged" go the spoils?

GEORGE R. LA NOUE

IN the summer of 1998, the U.S. Department of Commerce released a controversial study supporting a form of affirmative action for minority-owned businesses. These businesses, when competing to provide goods and services to the federal government, are granted certain bidding advantages over their nonminority-owned competitors. The study, called the "benchmark limits" report, was the culmination of nearly two years of research. It intended to determine the procurement areas where federal agencies could apply a 10 percent "price adjustment evaluation," a euphemism for a bid preference, to "small disadvantaged businesses" (SDBs), which are businesses owned by African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans, and Native Americans.

Here's how the system operates: If a non-SDB bids $1,000,000 on a given contract and a SDB bids $1,090,000, the contract would be awarded to the SDB, because its bid was not more than 10 percent over that of the non-SDB's. According to the benchmark study, these bid preferences could be applied

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to nearly three-quarters of the $180 billion federal procurement budget.

It is remarkable that a study of such constitutional and budgetary importance was only 12 pages of text and tables. In addition, its inception and development were unusually opaque. But litigation has forced disclosure of some of the study's data, and it is now possible to examine its questionable methodology and conclusions.

Program specifics

Since 1973, the federal government has administered several programs that favor minority-owned enterprises seeking federal contracts. The largest of these programs is the 8(a) business-development program, which sets aside about $6 billion in federal contracts for approximately 6,000 eligible firms. The program is controversial because only a few 8(a) firms have reaped the lion's share of the contracts. In 1995, 1 percent of all 8(a) firms received a quarter of the money designated for the program. Few firms ever graduate from the 8(a) program.

The other major federal program for awarding contracts is the Small Disadvantaged Business (SDB) program. This program offers bid preferences to SDB firms if procurement officers determine that the preferences will be used to meet minority business goals. In 1994, Congress extended the 5 percent quota for SDB contracts, which was being used by the Department of Defense, to all federal agencies.

Both the 8(a) and the SDB programs employ the concept of "presumptive eligibility" to determine which firm owners are "socially and economically disadvantaged." What this means is that any person who is a member of one of the previously mentioned minority groups is automatically considered *socially* disadvantaged. Firm owners not from presumptively eligible groups can enter the program only if they can prove, with the requisite documentation, that they have been subjected to discrimination. The upshot is that over 99 percent of the 8(a) and SDB firm owners are members of presumptively eligible groups.

In the 8(a) program, to be considered *economically* disadvantaged, a firm owner must have a net worth of less than

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

$250,000, excluding the value of the business and residence equity. The SDB program uses a more generous $750,000 limit, with the same exclusions. These limits mean that 80 to 90 percent of the business-owning families in the United States are "economically disadvantaged." Thus the true criteria for 8(a) and SDB certification is "social disadvantage" or membership in a minority group.

In 1995, the Supreme Court ruled, in *Adarand v. Pena*, that "strict scrutiny" be applied to the federal government's use of racial classifications in denying or conferring benefits. In other words, such racial classifications are unconstitutional unless the government has a compelling interest in using them in a narrowly tailored way against flagrant discrimination. This is a very stringent standard. Since *Adarand*, three U.S. district courts have struck down federal transportation programs that were using racial and ethnic preferences.

Adarand is an extension of a 1989 Supreme Court decision, *Croson v. City of Richmond*, which applied strict scrutiny to state and local minority procurement programs. Since the *Croson* decision, a variety of other race-based programs, in admissions, employment, redistricting, and contracting, have been found to violate the equal-protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. One consequence of the *Croson* decision was that many state and local governments commissioned "disparity studies," which purported to reveal discrimination in the awarding of contracts. Based on these studies, minority set-aside programs were initiated, maintained, or expanded. About 140 studies comparing disparities in the availability and utilization of minority-owned businesses have been completed at a cost of over $55 million. The validity of these studies, when judged by the strict-scrutiny standard, has not been proved in the courts. In fact, none of the studies has survived when subjected to discovery and brought to trial.

The benchmark study

In 1996, the Justice Department proposed that "benchmark limits" be created for each industry. These benchmarks were intended to represent the "level of minority contracting that one would reasonably expect to find in a market absent discrimination or its effects." The benchmark limits were also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

supposed to guide the decision of whether minority preferences were even necessary for that industry.

In 1998, the benchmark study—the first federal attempt at a disparity study—was released by the Department of Commerce. Since the report was so brief, lacked details about its methods, and did not offer any specific conclusions, Congressional staff members assumed that a more comprehensive follow-up report would soon be made available. When that did not happen (no such document existed), the Senate and House Judiciary Committees asked to meet with the benchmark study's authors. A meeting was scheduled a few weeks later at the White House, but no Commerce Department personnel attended. The Justice Department and White House officials knew practically nothing about the benchmark study's methodology, and scarcely any helpful information was exchanged. The Justice Department and White House officials promised that further questions could be faxed to the benchmark study's authors. The faxed inquires were never answered.

On the surface, the benchmark study appeared to measure disparities in the availability of SDBs and their use during fiscal year 1996. To account for the different conditions in the various industries, the study based its calculations on two-digit Standard Industrial Codes (SIC). The study found a disparity between SDB availability, or capacity, and SDB utilization in 40 of the 68 comparisons selected. This disparity, said the study's authors, justified the imposition of the 10 percent bid preferences.

But, upon closer examination, the study is contradictory and implausible. SDBs are, by definition, small disadvantaged businesses. Yet, in several of the Standard Industrial Codes, SDBs were estimated to have an extraordinary capacity to supply federal procurement. For example, SDB capacity was estimated at 33.1 percent in SIC 50 (wholesale trade-durable goods). In SIC 58 (eating and drinking establishments), SDBs were estimated to cover 80.5 percent of the federal government's required capacity. This suggests that something was wrong with the study's calculations.

Data-collection problems

Initially, the benchmark study used census data in the form of the Survey of Minority Owned Business Enterprises

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(SMOBE) to measure the availability of minority firms for federal contracts. While many studies on contracting discrimination have been based on census data, not one has survived judicial scrutiny. The data are obsolete. Further, information on which firms have bonding and licensing or which ones are willing to engage in federal contracting is not available in census data. But the Commerce Department did not finally abandon the SMOBE data until a pilot study revealed that the data were insufficient.

The firm Westat was eventually commissioned to collect data on companies that had made bids for federal contracts amounting to more than $25,000. Westat acquired information on approximately 12,600 contracts. Although the benchmark study mentioned the Westat sample, it did not indicate the total number of federal contracts, the distribution of contracts by SIC codes, or whether the sampled contracts adequately represented the corresponding federal agencies. According to the 1996 Federal Procurement Report, there were 460,733 contracts awarded in 1996, though many were valued at less than $25,000.

Using the Westat sample, the Commerce Department determined the number of SDB and non-SDB firms that bid at least once in each SIC (though the department has never released these figures). Then the department took an additional step, which skewed the statistics. It added to the number of SDB bidders all 8(a) firms—whether or not they offered a bid. The resulting distortions are potentially enormous. In SIC 73 (business services), it was revealed during litigation that of the 2,206 SDB firms considered available during fiscal year 1996, 1,497, or 68 percent, were 8(a) firms. Some of those 8(a) firms may have offered a bid, but many did not. Clearly, if a firm does not bid, then it is not really competing for a contract. Furthermore, most 8(a) firms do not bid in open competition; they compete only for reserved contracts limited exclusively to other 8(a) firms, or they receive "sole-source contracts" based on their minority status. In fiscal year 1995, only 4.3 percent of all 8(a) contracts were competitively bid.

Apples and oranges

SICs are reported by using two-, three-, and four-digit codes. For example, SIC 73 is business services; SIC 737 is comput-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ers; and SIC 7378 is computer maintenance and repair. Thus there are important methodological decisions to be made about the specificity of industry groupings. In its decisions about aggregating or disaggregating industry categories, the Commerce Department is inconsistent. In agriculture, mining, rubber, plastics and leather, pipeline and utilities, finance insurance, and real estate, the department merged substantially different industries into a single category. The construction industry, on the other hand, was not only broken down by building construction (SIC 15), heavy and highway construction (SIC 16), and special trades (SIC 17) but by nine geographical regions as well. There is no logical reason for combining some two-digit SIC codes and ignoring regional differences while separating others for regional analysis—except for the department's desire to manufacture statistically significant results.

Since SDBs are more heavily represented in some four digit SICs than others, the decision to aggregate or disaggregate has practical consequences. If there is underutilization of SDBs in janitorial services, that should have no bearing on federal contracts for computer maintenance and repair. Since the data have not been broken down, there is no way to determine whether, if a disparity existed in SIC 73, a disparity would also exist in SIC 737 or SIC 7378.

As it happens, SIC 73 is not even an industry; it includes a hodgepodge of business services that are amalgamated merely for the convenience of census reporting. SIC 73 encompasses firms specializing in advertising, janitorial services, pest control, detective work, and computer services. The benchmark study reported that in SIC 73, SDBs comprised 47 percent of the total companies and 40.2 percent of the capacity competing for government contracting. Yet SDBs received "only" 26.4 percent of the contract dollars. On the basis of this disparity, SIC 73 was determined to be an "industry" where price-evaluation adjustments—the 10 percent rule—could be imposed. But, according to the Small Business Administration's (SBA) website, within SIC 73, SDBs comprised only 2,749 of 44,258 small businesses—6 percent—in 1999. If large businesses and businesses not on the SBA list were added to the total, the percentage of SDBs declines even further. According to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

1992 Census of Service Industries, there were 306,551 establishments in SIC 73 that had employees.

The conclusion that small disadvantaged businesses hold 40.2 percent of federal contracting capacity within SIC 73 resulted from the benchmark study's faulty methodology. For starters, the study considered 8(a) firms as available for all contracts in SIC 73—regardless of their specialties or whether they even offered bids for competitive contracts, or any contracts. In addition, the study did not consider the number of times a firm bid or the size of the contracts a firm bid upon, both of which affect the total dollars a firm is awarded. Since non-SDBs are larger than SDBs, it is plausible that for contracts without racial preferences, they would bid more often, and for larger contracts, than SDBs. Despite these and other egregious problems with the benchmark data, the Commerce Department regards the study's conclusions as decisive for determining where bidding preferences should be applied.

Who is discriminating?

A properly done disparity analysis may reveal discrimination in contracting, but it rarely indicates the source of the discrimination. Identifying the source is essential to applying a narrowly tailored remedy. While the authors of the benchmark study state that its "methodology is designed to ensure that the price adjustments authorized by reforms are narrowly tailored to remedy discrimination," they offer no explanation of how that discrimination occurred and by whom it was committed.

According to the Justice Department's and SBA's official testimony, they knew of no documented incidents of discrimination by a federal procurement officer in the last 10 years, let alone any pattern of discrimination. If federal procurement officers are discriminating in the awarding of contracts, sanctioning or retraining such officers, not using bidding preferences, would be the appropriate narrowly tailored remedy.

One theory the Commerce Department advanced is that the discrimination may occur somewhere in the private marketplace, making SDBs less competitive because of discrimination by lenders or suppliers. Aside from the fact that no study has identified patterns of private-sector discrimination in contracting with any

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

degree of specificity, such a theory is not plausible. To begin with, the regression adjustments in the benchmark study's statistics were intended to control for variation in firm capacities, so that differences in SDB and non-SDB capacity were already accounted for when the disparities were calculated. If there were other variables that might have affected the relative capacity of SDBs and non-SDBs, the study does not specify them. If firms of equal capacity receive unequal awards from federal procurement, that would indicate disparate treatment by *federal procurement officers* rather than by private-sector companies.

Another problem is that the benchmark study found uneven patterns of underutilization and overutilization for SDBs in several SICs that are inconsistent with theories of private discrimination. For example, SDBs were underutilized in SIC 34 (fabricated metal products) and overutilized in SIC 33 (primary metal industries). What theory of private-sector discrimination could explain such results? Finally, if underutilization of SDBs is a sign of discrimination in the private sector, what is overutilization of SDBs a sign of? Commerce Department officials had no explanation for this phenomenon.

More trouble ahead

The Commerce Department is proceeding with plans for a new benchmark study in the year 2000. Since the administration is paying private consulting firms to recruit 30,000 minority-owned businesses a year to seek SDB certification, SDB availability will surely increase. This will mean more "disparities," more political pressure for the expansion of bidding preferences, and more resentment at another unjust assault upon merit in our public policy.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Designing the cityscape

DAVID BROOKS

FREDERICK Law Olmsted, who spent much of his life designing places where people could find refuge, never seemed to find refuge for himself. He never settled down and built a private estate where he could retire and retreat from the pressures of the world. Instead, he traveled and worked ceaselessly. In 1894, at age 69, he wrote the following in a letter to his stepson John about his schedule for the coming months:

> I am doubting some whether Eliot had better come here now or wait till February when, if living, I must come again. It should depend on the state of work elsewhere. I should think that by the end of next week I should be ready to start for Atlanta. Have you no doubt of the expediency of my going to Louisville, to Chicago, Detroit, Buffalo, Rochester? It is a long and risky journey for me. I am not quite sure of the plan we had in view when I left.

Even by the standards of the Victorian era, he possessed an awesome capacity for work. Olmsted was a believer in Thomas Carlyle's gospel of salvation through labor: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might. Work while it is called Today; for the Night cometh, wherein no man can work." Olmsted certainly lived up to the creed.

Still, it's sad to read of Olmsted's final years. He had achieved so much in life. He was already celebrated as the designer of Central Park, Prospect Park, Biltmore, and so many other great landscapes. He had managed the Sanitary Commission during the Civil War and one of the largest gold mines in the world just after. He had helped found the *Nation* magazine. Yet he never seemed to stop slaving away, never seemed to taste contentment. He just kept traveling from place to place, piling project upon project, an ever expanding list of parks, cemeteries, campuses, and properties. In part, he was driven by a desire to make his family financially secure. But there must also have been some other imperative within him, some

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

little engine of ambition that, as with Lincoln, knew no rest. And maybe he had such a passion for the restorative and calming influences of nature because it allowed him to sample the tranquillity so obviously lacking in his own nature.

Of course, there is something self-defeating about making a profession out of your haven. Olmsted rarely seemed to enjoy his triumphs. He suffered bouts of depression. In his final years, he fell victim to dementia, and he finally died out of public sight.

THERE are two great contrasts that recur in Witold Rybczynski's superb biography, *A Clearing in the Distance: Frederick Law Olmsted and America in the Nineteenth Century*.† The first is that between Olmsted's peripatetic and industrious life, on the one hand, and the natural tranquillity of the places he designed, on the other. And the second is that between rational planning, which is what Olmsted loved, and organic growth, which is what so many of his parks appear to be.

Olmsted, Rybczynski emphasizes, was an organizer and a planner. He was "one of the first people to recognize the necessity for planning in a large industrializing society—whether in peace or war." The diarist and civic leader George Templeton Strong saw him that way too. "He is an extraordinary fellow, decidedly the most remarkable specimen of human nature with whom I have been brought into close relations." Strong then added, "Prominent defects, a monomania for system and organization on paper (elaborate, laboriously thought out, and generally impracticable), and appetite for power."

What are we, a century later, to make of this point? On the one hand, Olmsted is a revered figure. The mere mention of his name tends to arouse rapturous descriptions of some beautiful spot in one of his parks. But, on the other hand, we are today extremely skeptical of planning, of efforts to impose rational schemes on complex reality. We've seen such schemes end in disaster too often, whether in the planned economies of Eastern Europe or the planned housing developments in American cities. So, does Olmsted reach out across the decades to tell us that we have overreacted to the recent failures of planning? Does his work demonstrate that large planned efforts to re-engineer reality can indeed work out, if they are done right?

One thing is certain, he did not plan his own life. Instead,

† Scribner. 480 pp. $28.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

he improvised and stumbled. When Olmsted was three, his mother died after taking an accidental overdose of laudanum while suffering a toothache. His stepmother showed little interest in him, and he was shuttled about from one New England boarding school to another. It was during this sad and unruly childhood that he developed his passion for long solitary hikes. Searching for a place in the world, he enlisted as a seaman on a trading vessel to the Orient. But conditions were horrible, and he was scarcely permitted to leave the ship once there. He tried his hand at surveying, bookkeeping, and scientific farming, after his father bought him some property on Staten Island. He did not succeed at any of these endeavors.

AFTER a trip to Europe, Olmsted, then 30, published his first book, *Walks and Talks of An American Farmer in England*. This led to a few freelance writing assignments, in such journals as *The Horticulturalist*, and finally to an assignment to be the Southern correspondent for the *New York Daily Times*. Here, finally, was a job that suited his talents, traveling and observing. Olmsted laboriously made his way through the backward Southern states, sending back dispatches that many historians still regard as the most accurate depiction of the conditions in the pre–Civil War South. Olmsted had a political purpose as well. Abolitionist sentiment was rising, but Olmsted, ever the moderate, sought gently to persuade Southerners that slavery was a burden, not a benefit, that laborers would be more productive if they were paid rather than owned.

Upon his return, Olmsted became managing editor of *Putnam's* magazine. He met and published Washington Irving, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Emerson, Thoreau, Melville, Longfellow, and a young Charles Eliot Norton. Indeed, one of the recurring motifs in his life is how small the American establishment was in those days. Olmsted was able to have broad contacts in Boston, New York, and Washington thanks to this interlocking network, and these contacts would produce diverse job offers and career opportunities again and again. Even when he was failing as a farmer on Staten Island, his neighbors included William Henry Vanderbilt, William Cullen Bryant, publisher George Palmer Putnam, and Judge William Emerson, brother of the writer.

A travel book on Texas came next, and then, through contacts, he got wind of a delicious job opening. The commission that was to oversee the design and construction of Central Park in Manhattan was looking for a superintendent. He got the job, and when a competition was declared for the park

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

design, he and a friend, the architect Calvert Vaux, entered and won. Rybczynski points out that the design for Central Park is "an impressive achievement for two neophytes, but it is the work of beginners. Its many different parts barely hold together—they are simply fitted into the awkward rectangle, side by side. There is no narrative thread." These defects, he continues, were corrected in later projects, such as Prospect Park. Still, even if he had stopped just with his first park, that would have been sufficient. How many other Americans have provided such great pleasure to so many?

EVEN in this first commission Olmsted demonstrated his great gift—he was long headed. He could see how things would and should look generations hence, and he designed with that time frame in mind. One day, when he was a boy less than 10, Olmsted visited his grandfather, normally tightlipped, who nonetheless brought him out and showed him an old elm tree. The grandfather had planted that very tree as a young boy. "It came to me after a time as he went on talking about it," Olmsted wrote years later, "that there had been nothing in all his long life of which he was so frankly proud and in which he took such complete pleasure as the planting and the beautiful growth of this tree." If ever there was an anecdote that prefigured the man, that was it.

One passage from one of his reports to the Central Park Commissioners is worth quoting because it illustrates his genius for foresight. Remember that as it was being constructed out of swamps, Central Park lay in a largely undeveloped swathe of Manhattan.

> The time will come [Olmsted wrote] when New York will be built up, when all the grading and filling will be done, and when the picturesquely-varied rocky formations of the Island will have been converted into foundations for rows of monotonous straight streets, and piles of erect angular buildings. There will be no suggestion left of its present varied surface, with the single exception of the Park. Then the priceless value of the present picturesque outlines of the ground will be more distinctly perceived, and its adaptability for its purposes more fully recognized.

Olmsted went on to say that the features of the landscape should be "judiciously developed," which as Rybczynski points out, was quite an understatement, given the amount of blasting, earth moving, and planting that was required.

From Central Park on, Olmsted's life was a series of arduous triumphs. His projects were arduous not least because he

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

had to fight clients who lacked his long view, and workers and others battled him at every turn. Rybczynski describes many of his projects, including Prospect Park, Cornell University, State Reservation at Niagara Falls, San Francisco Public Grounds, Trinity College (Hartford), Yale University, U.S. Capitol Grounds, Back Bay Fens (Boston), Stanford University (Leland Stanford overruled most of his designs), the '89 Columbian exposition, Brookline Hill subdivision (Massachusetts), Wilmington Parks, National Zoo (Washington), Biltmore estate, Smith College, and so on and so on.

It doesn't take a genius to see why Olmsted's plans succeeded while those of other ambitious planners failed. First, he studied and respected the local context. He may have blasted hillsides or planted hundreds of thousands of trees and shrubs, but he generally conformed to the original features of the spot, both topographically and horticulturally. He didn't try to reshape nature, but accentuate it. Second, he considered himself an artist, not a scientist. He was living just before the great burst of social-science arrogance, and had no taste for mechanistic regularity, predictability, or numeric elegance. Instead, he liked a little wildness and disorder. He spent the last years of his life trying to establish landscape architecture as a respected art form. Finally, he was a moderate person. He was a fighter, certainly, but as his Civil War writings demonstrate, he lacked the radical's desire to upend reality. He had an establishmentarian sensibility, which not only helped him win commissions but allowed him to appreciate society as it is.

IN the wake of Edmund Morris's notorious Reagan biography, one thing must be said about Rybczynski's book. It contains fictional interludes. When I stumbled across the first one, my heart sank. But the fact is they work. They are little set scenes in which Rybczynski describes Olmsted first hearing about the Central Park job, or riding on a steamboat down the Mississippi. Sometimes they fill in holes in the story, which Rybczynski probably couldn't get documentation for. But most importantly, they give the reader a sense of how the man moved, spoke, and thought. It's only Rybczynski's conjecture, of course. But it feels right, and in each episode, Rybczynski has remained true to the facts as best as he can determine them. There is no fictional Witold Rybczynski traipsing into Olmsted's life. Instead, the author is restrained, and as with all the pages of this book, elegant and trustworthy. It's a wonderful account of a great man who gave more pleasure than he got.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Madness and Enlightenment

BRIAN C. ANDERSON

IN his highly influential book, *Madness and Civilization,* Michel Foucault indicted the modern West for its treatment of the "insane." According to Foucault, Western societies, bowing before the Enlightenment idol of Reason, built a theoretical and institutional quarantine against madness. The Cartesian rational mind must not suffer from exposure to irrationality; the madman must not roam freely through town and country as he did during the Middle Ages, a mocking reminder of human mortality and God's infinite wisdom. Instead, Foucault claimed, the insane were thrown into cells with other dissidents from the rising bourgeois moral order—the poor, the criminal, and the licentious. The supposed liberation of the mad during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century by "alienists" Phillippe Pinel in France and William Tuke in England, he argued, only furthered their exclusion. These reformers herded the mad into asylums, where an arid "science" of psychiatry silenced their Dionysian voices. Enlightenment, Foucault held, was bought at the cost of excluding the mad: Such was the heavy price of Reason's "progress."

Though many scholars rightly questioned its historical accuracy, Foucault's book strongly influenced the anti-psychiatry movement, whose baleful legacy of deinstitutionalization of the insane we still live with today, and it remains a much-taught text in the university. It is significant, then, that Marcel Gauchet and Gladys Swain's *Madness and Democracy: The Modern Psychiatric Universe* †—first published in France in 1980—has newly appeared in abridged form in Princeton's commendable New French Thought series. When the publisher Gallimard launched the original edition, Foucault agreed to review it for several major publications, then neglected to write any reviews, assuring the book a muted initial reception.

† Princeton University Press. 323 pp. $29.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Foucault's biographer claims the philosopher was intimidated. It is easy to see why. Gauchet and Swain offer a richly historical analysis of the birth of the asylum and the development of psychiatry sharply at odds with Foucault's relentlessly anti-Enlightenment approach. Though the authors are not uncritical of modern psychiatry, or, for that matter, of the Enlightenment and the modern world, their work is refreshingly sober in its conclusions, far removed from Foucault's romantic excesses.

GAUCHET, editor of the prestigious journal *Le Débat* and one of France's foremost political philosophers, and Swain, a practicing psychiatrist until her untimely death in 1995 at the age of 48, shine a Tocquevillian light on the historical emergence of psychiatry and the insane asylum, revealing them to be inseparable from the development of modern democracy. The authors ambitiously divide Western political history into three broad eras, looking at each one through the lens of the social history of insanity: the premodern, theocratic universe; democratic modernity; and something new, only now opening before us, which I would call a humbled modernity.

In premodern societies, Gauchet and Swain observe, the mad were indeed free to wander about, just as Foucault claimed—the religiously ordered universe of the Middle Ages reserved a place for the insane, as it did for every other creature in God's Great Chain of Being. Yet toleration of the mad did not mean society considered them fully human or that their lot was enviable, the authors stress. On the contrary, mocked and derided, often displayed for public amusement or chased through the streets by cruel children, the insane inhabited the margins of the premodern world, a place of natural hierarchy and exclusion rather than of equality and inclusion. These were creatures "set apart in their difference," Gauchet and Swain suggest, with whom reasoning beings had nothing in common.

In Gauchet and Swain's view, democratic modernity—their second era—changed everything. Shattering the Great Chain of Being, refounding society on the basis of the social contract, remaking everything in man's image, and unleashing a powerful wave of equality that still sweeps us along, modern democratic societies dramatically transfigured the status of the insane. Gauchet and Swain credit Pinel and his ally, Jean-Etienne Esquirol—the two French fathers of "moral treatment" (i.e., psychiatry) and the asylum—for the new social

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

attitudes toward madness. Contrary to Foucault, who dismissed "moral treatment" as an insidious form of exclusion, Gauchet and Swain convincingly argue that it expressed confidence in the possibility of communicating with the insane, signaling, for the first time in Western history, that the mad were in some important sense human beings like us with the capacity to reason. The reach of democratic equality now extended to the insane.

Both Pinel and Esquirol, working in the immediate aftermath of the French Revolution, were initially optimistic about curing the insane and making them full citizens through moral treatment. After all, what was not possible for Revolutionary Man, in full possession of himself and his society? Pinel and Esquirol's optimism quickly faded, though, as most of the mad remained stubbornly deranged and often dangerous after treatment. It was soon evident to the alienists that long-term institutional care was unavoidable.

As asylums rapidly opened across Europe throughout the nineteenth century, the authors show, the goal of moral treatment began subtly to shift from that of seeking a cure to that of socialization. The idea was to get the mad patient to fit in with a more or less permanent population of the insane, to set up a perfectly ordered counter-society of the mad. The asylum became a kind of democratic utopia, cut-off from the rest of the world and programmed by the psychiatrist as if men—even madmen—were machines, which could be manipulated and plugged into the collective. Like all utopias, it didn't work. The human parts resisted their incorporation.

Indeed, the asylum was, Gauchet and Swain suggest, "a sort of laboratory of power" where the entire trajectory of modern politics played itself out in microcosm, from the naïve faith in human reason in the aftermath of the democratic revolution, to utopian hopes that one could mold human beings into any shape desired, to the dismal failure of those hopes. Despite marking a humanitarian advance—one that Foucault's wholesale condemnation of the modern world did not acknowledge—the history of the asylum also prefigured the totalitarian threat that has haunted the democratic universe from the start.

BUT the asylum's strange and unfortunate story points toward a third era of political history, whose outline is only now coming into focus: a humbled modernity. Gauchet and Swain draw two central lessons for this new political order from the history of the asylum: The first is what the authors

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

term the "impossibility" of totalitarianism. Projects of total control, from the nineteenth-century asylum to the Khmer Rouge's apocalyptic war to send Cambodia back to the year zero, have failed repeatedly over the last two-hundred years, though not without exacting an incalculable toll in human suffering. They fail because the human being, marked by an "indomitable inventiveness," can't be understood or treated like a machine. As Gauchet and Swain aver, "Must we not be sensitive first and foremost to the dimension of impossibility, wherever it is a question of reforming personalities or transforming subjects, whenever we are dealing with the powers of institutions or the integral organization of collective space?"

The failure of the asylum also allows us to see the tragic side of human freedom. Gauchet and Swain argue that the new model of insanity led inexorably to the modern sense of the self. Just as the first alienists discovered in the mad a capacity to reason and an ability, however truncated, to act as free agents, so modern men learn to grapple with their divided selves, which strive to achieve autonomy, without ever completely succeeding. In both instances, the authors say, the point is to avoid hubris. We cannot overcome the divided self, neither by absolutizing freedom and self-mastery nor by abolishing human liberty. We are both free and not free, an uneasy condition that we have yet to come to terms with or truly understand.

So what does this dawning era of humbled modernity, unveiled as a negative image by the asylum, look like? It distrusts any utopian efforts to solve the political problem, though it believes the general democratic drift of the modern world to be just. It is sharply aware of the limits of what the state or any centralized authority can do. It recognizes the deep and impenetrable mystery of the human soul. It has a sense of tragedy. We can see it, I believe, in the abandonment of the most vaulting dreams to recreate the human world; we can see it in the reorganization of businesses away from top-down, heavily bureaucratic management toward more flexible, decentralized practices; and we can see it, too, in our confused, groping steps toward a new approach to the mentally ill that would neither recreate the big asylum nor leave, as did deinstitutionalization, the insane to fend for themselves.

Madness and Democracy, translated with clarity by Catherine Porter, is not without difficulties. It is gnomic in expression and, like Foucault's *Madness and Civilization*, concentrates

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

too extensively on French history (a useful complement to Gauchet and Swain is Klaus Dörner's *Madmen and the Bourgeoisie: A Social History of Insanity and Psychiatry*, which draws on German as well as French and English experiences). More troubling, the authors' periodization of history is too rigidly schematic and wrongly downplays the role of actual historical actors in favor of abstract anthropological forces inexorably shifting behind the backs of men. But Gauchet and Swain's *Madness and Democracy* is impressive: a book of grand aspiration that illuminates crucial aspects of our humbled modern condition.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION
(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication title: *The Public Interest*. 2. Publication number: 0033-3557. 3. Date of filing: October 1, 1999. 4. Issue frequency: Quarterly. 5. Number of issues published annually: Four. 6. Annual subscription price: $25.00. 7. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. 8. Complete mailing address of the headquarters of general business offices of the publisher: *The Public Interest*, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. 9. Full names and complete mailing addresses of Publisher, Editors, and Managing Editor: Publisher, National Affairs, Inc., 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. Editors, Irving Kristol and Nathan Glazer, *The Public Interest*, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. Managing Editor, Eric S. Cohen, *The Public Interest*, 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. 10. Owner: National Affairs, Inc. (nonprofit), 1112 16th Street, N.W., Suite 530, Washington, D.C. 20036. 11. Known Bondholders, Mortgages, and Other Security Holders Owning or Holding 1 Percent or More of Total Amount of Bonds, Mortgages, or Other Securities: none. 12. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates. The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for federal income tax purposes has not changed in the preceding 12 months. 13. Issue Date for Circulation Below: Fall 1999.

15. Extent and Nature of Circulation	Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months	Actual no. copies of single issue published nearest to filing date
A. Total No. Copies	9,200	9,200
B. Paid circulation		
1. Sales through dealers and carriers	1,260	1,320
2. Mail subscriptions (outside county)	4,244	4,107
3. Mail subscriptions (inside county)	362	470
C. Total paid and/or requested circulation	5,866	5,897
D. Free distribution by mail	706	897
E. Free distribution outside mail	246	233
F. Total free distribution	952	1,130
G. Total distribution	6,818	7,027
H. Copies not distributed	2,382	2,173
I. Total	9,200	9,200
Percent paid and/or requested circulation	86%	84%

I certify that all information furnished on this form is true and complete. I understand that anyone who furnishes false or misleading information on this form or who omits material or information requested on the form may be subject to criminal sanctions and/or civil sanctions: Eric S. Cohen, Managing Editor.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Innocence lost

DIANA WEST

CONSIDERING contemporary society's preoccupation with children, it's quite logical to conclude that ours is a child-centered culture. From "child-directed" curricula, to "child-friendly" restaurants, to "kiddiepalooza" rock concerts, the pace and pulse of American life is set according to the desires of the very young to a degree unprecedented in history. How can it be true, at the same time, that childhood itself has never been shorter? In her excellent book, *Ready or Not: Why Treating Children as Small Adults Endangers Their Future—and Ours,*† Kay S. Hymowitz explains this paradox, stepping through the looking-glass to offer an original and eye-opening interpretation of the revolutionary way Americans have come to regard and raise their young over the past 50 years. Hymowitz, a contributing editor of *City Journal* and bona fide child expert (she has three children), convincingly argues that our child-centered culture represents more than a change in manners and mores; it poses an actual threat to the future of the republic.

The fact is, as any politician worth his platitudes would agree, children are the future of the republic. Once upon a time, as Hymowitz reminds us, Americans banked that future on what she likes to call a "republican childhood," one that was, whatever its flaws, expressly designed to prepare the young for self-government. Rejecting the practice of corporal punishment, the architects of American education urged parents to appeal to and develop their children's hearts and minds in a process that was thought should take 15 to 20 years. It depended on a traditional domestic arrangement, administered by the mother, supported by the father, and overseen by the rest of society. At the end of the culturation process would be young adults who could balance such competing forces as per-

† Simon & Schuster. 304 pp. $25.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sonal ambition and the public good. As the author writes, "No one believed that the transmission of these complex and highly contradictory cultural values would come naturally."

And therein lies the crucial difference between then and now. Over the past half century, due to the liberalizing influences of psychologists, educators, lawmakers, advertisers, and an all-pervasive media, children have come to be seen in an entirely new light. Society now widely regards the young as rational and fully autonomous beings, miniature adults who lack only a little know-how—or, in the lingo of these putative experts, the "information" to make "better choices." Think of the toddler who is given "information" to make "better choices" about right and wrong; or the teenager who is given "information" about the mechanics (and the mechanical devices) of sex to make "better choices" about bedfellows. Children still require food, shelter, love, and stimulation, of course; but no longer are they seen as needing any concerted effort on the part of adults to induct them into what Hymowitz calls "a preexisting society, into a web of meaning, in short, into a culture." As she explains, "In this view, children need little shaping by adults; they are essentially 'finished,' and childhood has lost its traditional purpose as the time set aside for shaping raw human material into a culturally competent adult."

OF course, if childhood has lost its traditional purpose, it follows that adults have lost their traditional roles as well. Far from being expected to socialize and guide the young, adults have been reduced to "personal trainers and mere companions," charged not with building character but rather boosting "self-esteem." So much for "republican childhood." *Ready or Not* introduces us to the "anticultural child," a brave new being whose upbringing outside and independent of the traditions and riches of his own culture has resulted in nothing less than what Hymowitz calls, "a new kind of American personality, one that should give us great pause."

In treating the various stages of a youngster's development, from infancy to what the author calls "postmodern postadolescence," Hymowitz brings this new, sadly stunted American personality to life, applying her theories of anticulturalism to familiar social pathologies, from educational failure to rampant adolescent sexuality. It is a mark of Hymowitz's achievement that her theory holds, and sheds light on much of what ails our times.

Take the author's insightful observations on the profound

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

shift in the American outlook on infancy. No longer does society paint the age-old picture of the helpless infant dependent upon a mother's guidance to navigate and interpret the world. By the 1970s (just as women began going to work in large numbers), scientists began pushing a new model of infancy—the "competent infant," who is able to do arithmetic at five months, pick out Mom's face minutes after birth, and recognize a story in the womb.

Competent infant is the one we read about in all the baby guides, which exhort parents to nurture their baby's cognitive development above all, always according to the latest in "anticultural" thinking. "Make sure your baby, not you, is in the lead," the best-selling authors of *What to Expect* advise parents of two-month-olds. Adult guidance, the authors caution, "deprives a baby of a sense of control, turns off interest in the subject." Clearly, in this view, Mom and Dad have little to offer their baby either in terms of encouraging, or even curbing, certain behaviors, such as a child's rich potential for egotism. Popular child expert Penelope Leach puts parents in their place this way: "Rules are very useful in keeping a small child safe," she writes, adding, bizarrely, "but they don't really play much part in teaching [baby] how to behave."

An unbounded ego and a range of disciplinary problems are not the only bad results of such advice. In successfully preaching what Hymowitz calls a "paralyzing ambivalence," the high priests of infancy have neutralized traditional notions of parental authority, and in so doing, have attenuated crucial emotional links between parent and child. A baby, effectively deprived of his most important guides, is thus launched into an "anticultural childhood," fully sanctioned by experts committed to the anticultural myth that "children develop on their own and do not need to be shaped by culture."

HYMOWITZ turns her attention to this same force in the schools. Just as anticulturalism discounts the value of parental guidance and authority, it similarly rejects the traditional role of adult educators passing down valued knowledge to the young. "In true anticultural fashion, educators insist that the only thing that prevents children from learning is adults—or, more generally, culture," Hymowitz writes. For example, educators tend to believe that the rules of grammar, spelling, and structuring an argument actually inhibit a child's "natural creativity." Thus we see the advent of "invented" spelling, mangled, but allegedly "creative," writing, and other forms

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of gibberish that must suffice to show for a young life spent in the classroom. As Hymowitz points out, "Genuine creativity is possible only when one is so thoroughly versed in the laws of a discipline that they become a mode of thought." Pinpointing the problem with accuracy, she explains that those she calls "creativists" are confusing "novelty, irregular ways of seeing or naming things, with creativity."

Such confusion would seem to be a hallmark of anticulturalism. Sex educators regularly mistake value-free sexuality based on the amoral (and distinctly unromantic) process of "informed decision-making" with happiness. They do not realize, as Hymowitz explains, that "the decision-making model assumes that kids already possess the values, beliefs, and self-awareness that go into such decisions." They don't. And they won't. It is sadly true, as Hymowitz writes, that this clinically sterile, anticultural approach to sexuality has profoundly diminished the centrality of love itself.

But anticulturalism does more than shrink the soul. Consider the rights revolution that child advocates engineered to turn students into "citizens" by pressing such claims as a minor's freedom of speech or a minor's right to an abortion. As the courts have extended the law into the classroom, the informal authority of the school has been superseded by the inflexible letter of the law. "Making kids legally responsible for behaving according to norms they have yet to internalize does not help them in that project," Hymowitz writes.

> In fact, it is a dangerous return to outmoded [pre-republican] methods of childrearing. It substitutes the threat of alien force for personal persuasion and introduces peremptory power instead of the tedious and subtle work of socializing the young. Such threats, as nineteenth-century republican child theorists recognized, did not go far toward shaping a democratic personality.

And here is the rub. Society no longer is preoccupied by the task of shaping a republican personality. "Today's children and adolescents," the author concludes, "may be guaranteed rights to due process, to privacy, and to free speech but not to a responsible, democratic future."

HYMOWITZ'S arguments make perfect (if depressing) sense—but will they convince anyone? Underpinning her central theory of "anticulturalism" is the notion that there still exists a dominant culture, as opposed to what she calls the anticulture. One has one's doubts, particularly after reading the book's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fascinating, if downright horrifying, chapter on the media, "The Teening of Childhood." We could almost forgive parents for being cowed by the experts on matters relating to the mysteries of infancy and early childhood. What is ultimately unforgivable is how they have come to enable their own children to be exploited and dominated by the crudest influences of the marketplace—from MTV to the horror movie "Scream" to Beavis and Butthead. Having abdicated their own authority, parents have allowed noxious media influences to fill the breach and promote what the author calls "the cult of the teenager," probably the single-most destabilizing influence on traditional childhood. "Children liberated from parents and teachers are only released into new forms of control," Hymowitz writes—namely, the pop cultural dictates of what's hip and what's nerdy. Given the terrible complicity of parents—after all, they fund their children's increasingly extravagant consumerism—one has to conclude that parents themselves, unfortunately, are also products of anticulturalism.

Which leaves us exactly where? Although Hymowitz sees a glimmer of hope in the fact that Americans are not entirely satisfied with the anticultural underpinnings to their lives, the task of reconstructing a workable model of parental authority to satisfy both our modern democratic sensibilities and children's needs is more than formidable. But as sobering as *Ready or Not* is, it is also strangely uplifting. One has to applaud the success of the author's effort to explain so much with so neat and novel a theory. Perhaps that will prove to be the first step toward reformation.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Priestess of progress

HILLEL FRADKIN

A DISCUSSION has emerged on the Right of our political spectrum about the future and its prospects. It arises from the concern that our future be one of progress rather than regress, of innovation, both technologically and socially, rather than stagnation, stale habit, and reaction. Central to this debate is Virginia Postrel, perhaps the most vigorous defender of what she calls the "dynamist" future. In her recent book, *The Future and Its Enemies,*† Postrel celebrates human beings as the playful creators of their own destiny; and she believes that, in the aftermath of the Cold War, such a dynamic, playful future is finally possible, if only its enemies, whom she calls "stasists," can be defeated.

Postrel also believes that the old distinctions of Left and Right ought to be replaced by a new political distinction between dynamism and stasism, between the future and its enemies. Her book is, or at least claims to be, the first political theory of the new dynamist world. It is also a work of moral theory or ethics, since the dynamist society depends not only on limited government but on the encouragement of certain virtues, like courage and self-reliance.

The enemies of the future lack such virtues, according to Postrel, and are thus partisans of government regulation. These enemies come in two varieties: Technocrats and Reactionaries, and both have left-wing and right-wing versions. The technocrats are not opposed to progress as such; indeed they welcome it, especially technological progress. But they want to determine the character of that future before it arrives, and wrongly believe that they can. Reactionaries oppose the future and want to maintain the status quo or return to what they consider a simpler, more virtuous past.

But the question arises: Why are there such people? If the

† Simon & Schuster. 265 pp. $25.00.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

present, not to mention the future, is as glorious as Postrel takes it to be, why should there be people who fail to appreciate it? Why are there more stasists than dynamists, as Postrel claims? Are today's stasists merely an historical anomaly, products of the past who are destined to disappear as contemporary progress continues? Or do the positions they take, however accidental or even unreasonable, arise from abiding human characteristics and concerns that can be expected to persist in the future?

ONE of the virtues of Postrel's book is that she is aware of such questions and their importance. One of its shortcomings is that her treatment of them is harshly polemical. This is in keeping with the political character of the book and perhaps reflects an intentional rhetorical strategy—to appeal over the heads of the enemies of the future to a public that is still free to reject their advice. Still, the prospects of success for such a strategy rest on how deeply it has understood the sources of resistance to the dynamist future—and specifically, whether the stasist impulse is rooted in human weakness and error or human nature, the very thing that Postrel denies.

Postrel says that the first source of stasism is fear. Many people are made anxious by change, since they fear change may be for the worse. They are cowards. In response to this, Postrel calls upon us to be courageous, to face such fears in a manly fashion and conquer them. Courage then is one of the virtues Postrel means to inspire. In the closing lines of the book, as elsewhere, Postrel asserts that there is nothing to fear, there is no abyss opening beneath us, no inevitable limits or tragedy in human life. The courage Postrel calls for is not some grim duty imposed by the necessity of facing the harsh facts of life, as it might have been in an earlier age. Rather, it is the key to a new world of human fulfillment and happiness. It asks us not so much to put up with risk as to invite it as the condition of human happiness.

Another source of stasist enmity is aesthetic. Stasists cannot stand the messiness of dynamism. The creative processes that define the current and future scene produce a kind of chaos, mixing together all sorts of things in unusual and unprecedented ways. Moreover, many formerly distinct and independent things have their identity submerged and transformed, if not totally obliterated, in this process. This mixing does not respect older distinctions of high and low or good and bad but takes whatever it finds useful for producing something new.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Stasists are repelled by this chaos, preferring orderliness and hierarchy. They are snobs or neat-freaks.

IN short, Postrel believes that certainty is an illusion and a hindrance, and that the condition of human happiness is an uncertain, playfully self-created future. (How, one wonders, does she know that the uncertain future will be good rather than horrible?) In part, such happiness consists of a whole array of subsidiary goods: greater liberty in the form of an ever increasing range of choices, greater prosperity, and greater comfort. But Postrel does not limit herself to these. She believes that the cultivation of our distinctly human qualities and powers—above all, our intellectual capacities, our curiosity and love of knowledge, and our capacity to transform and control our world—is the key to human excellence. Such a life provides immense satisfaction, both through its concrete instances, such as the acquisition of some new piece of knowledge or the discovery of some new form of human power, and through the general sense and appreciation of the growth of our powers. And though in part such satisfaction appeals to human pride, it is joined to a sense of humility before the many things we do not yet know and the things we cannot yet do.

Postrel's espousal of intellectual cultivation bears some similarity to Socrates' claim that the highest and happiest life is the pursuit of wisdom. Her book is suffused with the notion that we live at a time foretold by Socrates in the *Republic*, when through the triumph of human reason, the "evils of the city" and the problems of human life have been overcome. But there is at least one important difference. Unlike the ancient Greeks and most subsequent Western philosophers, including the modern philosophers of liberty, Postrel rejects nature as a standard for defining the best human life. Instead, she holds a completely open-ended view of human possibility: Human beings are what they make of themselves, and there is no telling what that may be.

Our power over nature, including our own natures, shows that nature cannot be our standard. Postrel believes that at some future time the natural sciences might fulfill their objective with a complete account of nature, including all aspects of the natural cosmos. But even this would not limit human progress. The human capacity to transform nature is limitless. Also limitless is our capacity to derive pleasure from our own creativity.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

TO establish the happiness of such a life, Postrel must address the question of work. The life of creative progress is very busy and active and thus entails a great deal of what we ordinarily describe as work. But work, as most people understand it, is inseparable from the notion of pain, if not exclusively then partially. It is to Postrel's credit that she does not flinch from this subject. Rather, she claims that what we are accustomed to understanding as work is better understood as play, since the distinction between work and play is a false one.

Playfulness is, Postrel says, a good in itself. Citing the work of psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, she reports that "people say they are happiest when they are completely absorbed by some activity that challenges their skills, provides feedback, has rules and gives them a sense of control—when, in short, they are at play." This understanding of human happiness converges with Postrel's earlier account, which stressed intellectual satisfactions, through the assertion that "philosophy and science were invented and flourished because thinking is pleasurable."

Postrel opens her discussion of this theme with the example of beach volleyball, which is unfortunate because it does not amply represent the dawn of dynamism that she is describing. For what is really significant is the transformation of our economy from industry to information, from an economy based on the manipulation of large pieces of steel to an economy based on the manipulation of information. Postrel cites a number of cases in which technological progress and increased wealth resulted from people playing on computers—most notably, the development of the Internet.

In this, as in other respects, Postrel's moral and political theory seems to depend upon the very new and unique circumstances of contemporary America, perhaps even contemporary California. It requires the view that we, or at least we Americans, have over the past 10 to 15 years arrived at a special condition in which many age-old problems have been, in principle, solved. It also requires the view that this special condition can continue indefinitely, so long as we appreciate it and defend it from its enemies. If we do so, we will be beneficiaries of a "delightful paradox," where work is play.

There are, however, a number of difficulties with Postrel's account of the role of play in our society, the most important of which Postrel raises herself, at least implicitly. Despite the rise of the information age, it turns out that not everyone has

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the ability or opportunity to do playful work. For the majority of people, work is drudgery, and this includes people who work in information industries. When playful experimentation results in a great new software idea, it also results in thousands and even millions of lines of code that must be written and entered by small armies of programmers who may not find this playful or pleasant.

Postrel struggles with this difficulty. Some measure of the playful side of life can be found in almost any activity, she says. But she admits that the dynamic society will be characterized by considerable inequality in the happiness of its members. The happiest people will be those who can make play out of work, a capacity that appears to require a mixture of great daring and high intelligence. Moreover, there will be significant inequality of status. Those who "make play out of work" become the rulers. True, such rule lacks official status or sanction, which is, Postrel suggests, the great blessing and beauty of it. Such benign rule reconciles the tensions between public good and private interest, the age-old problem of politics. Since the chief interest of the rulers is play, their rule comes as close to being disinterested as is humanly possible. At the same time, they produce an immense public good in which we all share one way or another.

However, even such benign inequality inspires envy and, in a democratic society, such envy will express itself in the political process. Postrel attempts to persuade us to resist the politics of envy by arguing that we all share in the benefits of dynamism. That is to say, we all benefit from the growth of prosperity and the expansion of choice. But more significantly, Postrel appeals to the possibility that we might derive satisfaction from our sense of belonging to the grand enterprise of progress. She presents dynamism as a heroic adventure in which everyone can take pride, even if the greatest honor belongs to our captains, those special people who lead us through their playful activity.

THE quasi-heroic side of Postrel's argument has charm and might even have force in our public life if properly considered. The problem is that Postrel has not done so adequately. For Postrel, the polity is held together by its shared commitment to the processes of creative progress and playful work. To be sure, people may respect our greatest entrepreneurs even when their playful activity results in vast, incomprehensible fortunes. But are Americans willing to die for Bill Gates'

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

right to play? Postrel needs to explore a different and much less delightful paradox—that men will risk their own lives, not out of any enmity for the future, but for the future of someone or something else.

Postrel's appeal to heroism is flawed, because it is not grounded in things that men still respect and long for. If it is not to be the family, which has taken a beating in the last 30 years, it must be something else natural and familiar to Americans, such as liberty and faith. This, at bottom, is the problem that all would-be political reformers face: To honor the things that Americans already hold dear is to accept, however temporarily, the limits they might impose.

Postrel's view of the contemporary political landscape is also flawed. She finds enemies on the Right and the Left and seems to think there is not much to choose between them. Surely, she vastly overestimates the defects of the Right. For what most clearly defines the Right, in all its various parts, is adherence to the principle of limited government. And in the end, it is conservatives, not liberals, who will defend limited government, which is central to Postrel's vision of the dynamist society.

FINALLY, Postrel does not give enough consideration to the immediate founder of the progress she celebrates, Ronald Reagan. Reagan was a great friend of the future and persuaded his fellow Americans to believe again in the future of the American enterprise. He succeeded in large measure because of his understanding of American politics and its role in American dynamism, and because of his understanding of the dignity of political activity and his taste and skill for it. For the purpose of finding a politics that would protect American dynamism from unhealthy regulation, I believe Postrel would profit from devoting more time to studying and celebrating his career and less to the inventors of the microprocessor and beach volleyball.

Reagan's devotion to the American future had much to do with his respect for the American past—specifically, the past represented by men like John Locke, who first imagined our future, and the framers of the Constitution, who made it a living reality. If we cannot summon up any gratitude for their efforts, gratitude not being one of our strong suits these days, we should at least consider their proven record as people who really knew how to make a future, one that has now lasted more than 200 years.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The shadow government

MICHAEL BARONE

HOW many federal employees work for the government? About half of them, says the old joke. Fewer than when we got in, says the Clinton administration. Now comes Paul Light of the Brookings Institution, with his book *The True Size of Government*,† which examines not simply the size of the federal government but its true scope, shape, and impact. His conclusion: Government is bigger than we think and, certainly, bigger than what the politicians tell us.

The number of federal civil-service workers is indeed lower than it was in 1992 and, for that matter, lower than it has been for most of recent history. It was 1.9 million in 1996, down from 2.4 million in 1984. The former number was about the same as in 1960 (1.8 million) and the latter about the same as in 1953 (2.1 million)—both were well below the 3.4 million of 1945.

So has the government been shrinking? Not exactly. The big dropoffs after 1945 and 1953 came because of the end of wars; the big dropoff in the Clinton years, Light shows, is due entirely to reductions in defense spending. Leaving out defense spending, the civil-service payroll would have increased 5 percent between 1984 and 1996. Light does give credit to Vice President Gore's "reinventing government" effort for making significant reductions in some categories of federal employees, especially middle managers. But he adds that many of them were reassigned as "team leaders": "There are more team leaders today in government than in all of Little League, Pop Warner football and peewee soccer combined." The largest reductions in federal employment have been in lower-level jobs, which have higher turnover and thus are more readily phased out by attrition.

But the number of federal civil-service jobs is, in many

† Brookings Institution. 280 pp. $18.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ways, a misleading measure of the cost and impact of the federal government. After all, both were bigger in real dollars in 1996 than in 1950 or 1960, when the number of employees was about the same. So Light attempts to calculate the size of the federal "shadow": the number of full-time equivalent employees working in the civil service, the military, the Postal Service, and under federal contracts and federal mandates for state and local government. Needless to say, it is much larger than the figure the Clinton administration provides. To the 1.9 million federal civil-service employees, Light adds 850,000 Postal Service employees, 1.5 million members of the uniformed military, 5.6 million jobs generated under federal contracts, 2.4 million jobs created under federal grants, and 4.6 million jobs required by federal mandates to state and local governments. He is appropriately modest about the accuracy of these estimates but surely he has the overall magnitude about right: almost 17 million "federal" jobs in 1996.

HISTORIC comparisons range from difficult to impossible. But it is apparent that the real federal work force is a lot larger than the Clinton administration's rhetoric and almost all other commentary suggest. Its 17 million jobs are one out of eight in the total work force—a large shadow indeed. And the federal share of total government jobs, when the effect of federal grants and mandates are counted, amounts to about 60 percent of all public employment—far higher than the 15 percent figure arrived at by identifying the employer's name on government workers' pay stubs. About four of ten Americans reside in a household where someone works directly or indirectly for the federal government. Not including defense cuts, all categories of federal employment rose between 1984 and 1996: civil-service jobs were up 5 percent; the contract work force rose 29 percent; and the grant work force rose 7 percent. Light also points out that federal titles ("principal associate deputy secretary," "chief of staff to the assistant secretary," etc.) have proliferated more in the Clinton years than in the 30 years preceding.

"It takes a very big government to deliver what Americans want," Light explains. To be sure, government's share of the work force is smaller than government's share of the gross domestic product, because much government spending consists of transfer payments, which require relatively few workers. But the numbers are still enormous. Consider, for example, the number of people employed under grants from certain

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

government departments in 1996: 762,000 for Education, 642,000 for Transportation, 395,000 for Health and Human Services, 166,000 for Labor, 143,000 for the Environmental Protection Agency. These are enormous organizations, larger than any or all but a handful of private firms. Light rightly points out that a government of this size can exert enormous influence over the private economy and people's personal lives—and far less transparently than if the services were all performed directly by federal employees.

THE important question, Light says, is not why the federal shadow has grown larger but why the civil service has stayed so small. He stresses what he considers the baleful influence of Congressman Jamie Whitten, the longest-serving member of the House ever (1941-95), who in 1951 used his seat on the Appropriations Committee to slap a freeze on federal hiring that stayed in effect until 1976, and who kept working for freezes thereafter. Light also shows how increasing the federal shadow has been in the interests of both Democrats and Republicans and even of federal government unions. "Too much of the federal government's current shadow appears to be an accident of political pressure, cowardly leadership and tepid analysis."

It is hard to deny that freezes, ceilings, and other devices used to hold down the nominal level of federal employment often produce perverse results. And it's lamentable that the more rational way of reducing government payrolls, RIFs (reductions in force), are so politically painful and disorienting that both the executive and legislative branches avoid them like poison.

As Light admits in passing, contracting out often makes sense. Thirty years ago, John Kenneth Galbraith argued for the nationalization of defense industries, since they work primarily for the government and siphon off profits. But few people today would argue that the government could replicate, under civil-service rules, the level of expertise and creativity so many defense contractors have produced. Similarly, a strong argument against proposals for Medicare drug benefits is that they would allow government to set prices for prescription drugs, which would stifle the creativity and ingenuity of the great pharmaceutical companies (though one must add that the government has managed to create superb basic research operations in the National Institutes of Health.)

Light's data suggest that in many cases work and jobs have

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

migrated from the federal civil-service system to the private sector, nonprofits, and state and local governments. This tends to increase efficiency, since civil-service regulations often make it difficult, if not impossible, to implement today's best management techniques.

BUT Light also has a point when he argues that outsourcing federal work permits it to be performed by organizations with cultures and goals that the political process would not tolerate in a more transparent system. For example, much of the money the federal government spends on "reproductive health" (a euphemism for such things as birth control and abortion) is contracted out to Planned Parenthood, which gets most of its revenues from government. Planned Parenthood has an agenda that is strongly supported by some and strongly opposed by others in an ongoing debate over "reproductive health" policy. Even so, no matter which side prevails in Congress or the administrative branch, the contractor's culture tends to prevail in the end.

The new Republican majority in the House tried in 1995 to bar organizations like Planned Parenthood from using federal funds to lobby for even more federal funds and for policies they favor. Liberals attacked such legislation as an infringement on free speech, and the bill died. But the House Republicans had a point: Why should taxpayers be forced to pay for lobbyists whose causes they find abhorrent?

Light has no simple solution to what he sees as the problem of the lengthening federal shadow and what he calls "the illusion of smallness"—the illusion that federal civil-service employees are the only people working for the federal government. He views government work as worthwhile—and quotes polls finding most voters agreeing—and, while alert to its shortcomings, obviously has an affection for the civil-service system. Conservatives who suspect that much government activity is superfluous and that the civil-service system is maladapted to today's America should nevertheless ponder the questions he raises. For a federal shadow that is not accountable to policy makers poses at least as great a threat to conservatives as to liberals.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Community action for the 1990s

LOUIS WINNICK

THANKS to its success and growth, the community-development approach to urban renewal is finally attracting serious scholarly attention. As documented in *Urban Problems and Community Development*,† a volume of essays based on a Brookings Institution conference, the movement is long past its role as bit player, when George Sternlieb, former director of the Center for Urban Policy Research at Rutgers University, joked that the raison d'être of grassroots development organizations was to warm the hearts and open the purses of credulous foundation trustees. Today, community-development programs are concrete, widespread, and effective. The movement's prime instrument is the Community Development Corporation (CDC), which takes the lead role in developing and restoring low-income housing in forsaken neighborhoods. The larger, more sophisticated CDCs have ripened into versatile real-estate entrepreneurs and mortgage brokers, and often provide such social services as day care, health clinics, and job training.

Community-based development takes many organizational forms. CDCs range from a score of blocks with a couple of thousand residents to large expanses containing over 100,000 people. The range of annual operating budgets is equally wide, from less than $500,000 to over $25 million. All ethnicities are represented, though blacks and Hispanics predominate. But despite their diversity, CDCs share a common thread: They are locally controlled, typically by a board of neighborhood residents, businesses, and social institutions, and they seek the improvement of a defined territory. What often began as a desk in the corner of a church has become a large-scale professional real-estate and social-service operation. Since 1970, the number of CDCs has grown from an estimated 200 to nearly 3,000.

† Brookings Institution Press. 627 pp. $56.95.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Numerous factors account for the movement's astonishing rise, which began with the Ford Foundation's Gray Areas program. These pilot programs were later undergirded and multiplied by the Great Society's Community Action Program and later by Model Cities. The Bedford-Stuyvesant Restoration Corporation, once the CDC prototype, has spawned numerous counterparts throughout the nation. But the definitive factor in the spread and increasing influence of CDCs was the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) of 1977. CRA generated a major flow of capital that eclipsed the comparatively thin and episodic support of private philanthropy. Federal tax credits further augmented these capital flows and extended investments to low-income housing. Banks and savings institutions, now required to restore mortgages and commercial credits to fallen neighborhoods, discovered quickly that the more firmly established community-development organizations were the most accountable clients, both as direct borrowers and as intermediaries, advisors, and monitors. As a result, the Local Initiative and Support Corporation (LISC) and the Enterprise Foundation, community development's primary national umbrellas, have attracted billions in private capital.

THE meteoric growth of CDCs and related grassroots initiatives owes much to their appeal across the political spectrum. The antistatist Right saluted community development as a proxy for government, which might shield the succored poor from the dead hand of bureaucracy. For example, the experimental prototype of Neighborhood Housing Services, which began in Pittsburgh and was the model for nearly a thousand more NHSs that followed, was wholly funded by the conservative Richard Mellon Scaife Foundation. Scaife conceived the NHS as an instrument to spur private mortgage investment for low-income housing rehabilitation, thereby skirting all federal money and regulations. The confounding irony is that the overwhelming majority of NHS replicates ignored this strategy and eventually sought as much government subsidy as they could lay their hands on.

On the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, radical activists envisioned community-based organizations as weapons of political empowerment, instruments to liberate the poor from chronic neglect. From the radical perspective, government subsidies, no matter how generous, are chains of oppression unless there is grassroots autonomy. Empowerment became the regnant buzzword, a term President Clinton deftly

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

swiped by redubbing Enterprise Zones as Empowerment Zones. And so government programs came to occupy the middle ground between Right and Left, adopting community-based organizations as a convenient layer of administrative governance in dilapidated areas where government alone was destined to fail.

But the extraordinary political consensus favoring community development entities falls short of unanimity. For example, several essays in *Urban Problems and Community Development* rehearse the decades-long debate about whether the primary purpose of subsidies is to uplift the status of dysfunctional families or to restore the viability of dysfunctional neighborhoods. The volume recalls yesteryear's attack by John Kain and others against "gilding the ghetto" (an attack famously revived a couple of years ago by Nicholas Lemann in the *New York Times Magazine*). It is unforgivably wasteful, say the anti-gildists, to pump huge subsidies into broken neighborhoods, whose departed jobs and institutions are hopelessly irretrievable and where barely any semblance of social structure remains.

The tension between uplifting poor families and restoring broken neighborhoods pervades other areas of social policy, in particular the issue of racial integration. Open-housing advocates vie mightily to facilitate the movement of blacks and other minorities to traditionally white areas, abetting the movement by litigation, financial aids, and advocacy. For obvious reasons, it is the employed, upwardly striving, and motivated blacks that constitute open housing's most eligible candidates. But such families are precisely those whom community-development organizations desperately wish to retain for their own rebuilding efforts. The split in goals frequently sparks angry disputes among equally righteous actors.

ENTRENCHED government bureaucracy is also a problem. As Anthony Downs, senior economist at the Brookings Institution, observes, community-development efforts must negotiate a Byzantine landscape of federal, state, and municipal subsidies, each pitted with its own rules and timetables. "It's like telling a person to play baseball," Downs writes, "but then tying his hands behind his back, making him hold the bat with his teeth, and tying his feet so he cannot run." Unless bureaucratic procedures can be streamlined and subsidies transformed from government to local control, CDCs will be forever stuck in the bush leagues.

Alice O'Connor, a history professor at the University of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

California at Santa Barbara, in her chapter "Swimming Against the Tide," is also skeptical: She argues that government is not fully committed to community rehabilitation, which means that community-development efforts are engaged in an uphill battle. By commitment, O'Connor means not merely a sufficiency of financial resources but, more fundamentally, the grievous contradictions of government policy. Community development will continue to swim against the tide if we fail to "create the political and economic conditions within which community development can actually work." Among the barriers to success are the geographic distribution of job and residential opportunities and the balance of political representation. Academic research on the plight of cities has wrongly focused on the "problems and pathologies that plague low-income communities" rather than on the misguided public policies that maintain, and even worsen, those pathologies.

THE verdict is not yet in on whether community development and other efforts at urban renewal can reverse the last 30 years of inner-city decay. Still, there is some cause for optimism: Multitudes of once-forsaken neighborhoods, such as Harlem, the Bronx, and Jersey City, are making a comeback. However, the improved neighborhoods tend to be along both coasts, recharged by globalization and swelling numbers of upwardly striving immigrants. Cities like Camden, Buffalo, and Louisville tell a very different story—but perhaps they, too, will soon benefit from community-based efforts at urban renewal.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CONTRIBUTORS

BRIAN C. ANDERSON is senior editor of *City Journal* and author of *Raymond Aron: The Recovery of the Political* (Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

MICHAEL BARONE is senior writer at *U.S. News & World Report*.

DAVID BOSWORTH is a fiction writer and essayist who teaches in the Creative Writing Program at the University of Washington in Seattle.

DAVID BROOKS is senior editor at the *Weekly Standard*.

ROGER CLEGG is vice president and general counsel at the Center for Equal Opportunity in Washington, D.C.

HILLEL FRADKIN is a resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute.

GEORGE R. LA NOUE is professor of political science and director of the Project on Civil Rights and Public Contracts at the University of Maryland Baltimore County.

ERIC M. PATASHNIK is assistant professor of political science and lecturer of law at Yale University. His book, *Putting Trust in the U.S. Budget*, will be published by Cambridge University Press this summer.

ISABEL V. SAWHILL is a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and serves as the president of the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy.

DAVID SKINNER is associate editor at the *Weekly Standard*.

DIANA WEST is a columnist and editorial writer for the *Washington Times*.

LOUIS WINNICK is vice-chairman of the Institute of Public Administration.

G. E. ZURIFF is professor of psychology at Wheaton College and a clinical psychologist at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED